UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Darlington Memorial Library

Mrs ELIZABETH HAMILTON.

From an Original Picture by Raeburn.

Engraved by W. T. Fry.

Published by Longman & Co March. 2d 1816.

WILLIAM & MARY DARLINGTON
MEMORIAL LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

MRS. ELIZABETH HAMILTON,

WITH

A SELECTION FROM

HER CORRESPONDENCE,

AND OTHER

UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS.

BY MISS BENGER.

SECOND EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1819.

Printed by A. Strahan,
Printers-Street, London.

ADVERTISEMENT.

A CONSIDERABLE period has elapsed since the following work was announced; much time having unavoidably been expended in collecting the Letters * which appear in the Correspondence, and still more in submitting to the perusal and revision of Mrs. Hamilton's literary friends those MSS. of which a very small portion is presented to the public. To account for

* It was stipulated by the correspondents, that the initial letters only of their names, or those of their respective friends, should be inserted. In lamenting this restriction, the Editor had no right to infringe the engagement. Fortunately, however, the more distinguished literary friends of Mrs. Hamilton, may be recognized by even this imperfect designation.

the exclusion of so many papers, it will be sufficient to state, that, as it appeared not desirable to extend the publication beyond two small volumes, it became necessary to preserve in these a certain harmony and consistency of character.

The Religious Tract which concludes the second volume was supposed to be destined for posthumous publication by the lamented Author. For the admission of the papers composing the private *Journal* it is presumed no apology is required; but it may be satisfactory to know that they were selected by the express desire of that person to whom the publication owes its existence, and that they were, even by her, considered as the best and purest tribute which could be offered to the memory of a beloved sister.

MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

Mrs. ELIZABETH HAMILTON.

That memoirs of literary persons are, in general, barren of incident, is a trite objection, which may be made to many other subjects of biographical composition; since, with the exception of warriors and adventurers, there are few individuals whose domestic annals might not be epitomised in a monumental inscription. But it may be asked, has biography no higher object than to collate facts and dates, and chronicle events? Should it not rather trace the progress of character, as developed in those habits and principles which operate univer-

sally on the happiness or misery of mankind? The history of the individual, to be complete, must include the history of his mind, and exhibit all its passions — its prejudices — its affections — whatever belongs to its moral system.

In a life devoted to quiet and seclusion, there may have occurred revolutions of opinion and vicissitudes of feeling, which, to those who would study human nature, are no less curious, and even more interesting, than the external changes of fortune which popularly arrest attention, and awaken sympathy.

The name of Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton has been long endeared to an intelligent class of readers, who, from a better spirit than vulgar curiosity, are prompted to enquire, not only by what efforts and with what gradations she advanced to distinction, but how far cultivation contributed to the developement of her talents, in what de-

gree her happiness was augmented by literary pursuits, or commensurate with moral and religious attainments.

From the fragment which comprises the most precious part of these volumes, it is evident that such enquiries had been anticipated by Mrs. Hamilton, and that she had even commenced a biographical sketch, which, in a finished state, must have formed a supplement to her other writings equally interesting and instructive. That so little of this should have been written, is a subject of regret, not only to the friends and admirers of the author, but to all who are interested in the study of the human mind. That she should have planned such a work, affords, however, an apt illustration of her firm, decided character; and in whatever degree it had been completed, it would, in an equal degree, have confirmed the testimony, or superseded the labour of her biographer. In the present defect of her own animated delineations, all that remains to be

attempted, is simply to collect from her early correspondence, or from some other equally authentic source, such evidence of her principles and habits, her feelings and conduct, as may enable the reader to form an opinion from the suggestions of his own unbiassed judgment. On the specimens from her early compositions, the extracts from her private journal, and the selection from her correspondence, it is not necessary to offer any observations: but it may be proper to state, that the sketch of her childhood and education, with all the subsequent domestic details, are communicated on the authority of a beloved sister. *

Many of the circumstances related in the following narrative are derived from a still more genuine source. Mrs. Hamilton, as is well known to all who were admitted to her domestic circle, in the society of a few select friends was often led to retrace the various

* Mrs. Blake, who is now her nearest surviving relative.

scenes and impressions of early youth, and by the vivacity of her descriptions almost persuaded the delighted auditors, that they had witnessed the events of her former existence. For those who have enjoyed the enviable privilege of companionship by her social fire-side, the following biographical sketch may perhaps possess some interest. To their indulgence and protection it is cheerfully committed by the writer, with the firm persuasion, that they who have participated in the recollections of this ever-to-be-loved and lamented friend, must equally sympathize in the feeling which has called forth this feeble effort to pourtray to the reader of her works the peculiar features of her character, and to enforce her precepts by the more powerful authority of her example.

BIOGRAPHICAL FRAGMENT

BY MRS. ELIZABETH HAMILTON.

HAVING often thought, that there is no person, however insignificant, who might not by a fair and impartial statement of the circumstances of his early life, render an essential service to the investigator of the human mind, I sit down to recall and to record every event which I can imagine to have been in any way conducive to the formation of my character and sentiments. Should what I now write never be seen by human eye, the retrospect may at least to myself be useful; as where it gives rise to reflections that mortify, the mortification may be salutary; where it produces a more lively view of the divine goodness, that view must be attended with corresponding sentiments of pious gratitude.

I have laughed at the philosophers for assigning to remote causes a mighty influence over human character; but it is only since domestic education has been in a great measure exploded, that the peculiar traits of family character cease to be distinguished. While children were, from generation to generation, brought up in the bosom of their own family, we may believe that they must, in many instances, have succeeded to prejudices as to an inheritance. Of all these prejudices, the pride of birth was in Scotland the most predominant. Its effects seem to have been injurious, or otherwise, according as the leading members of the family had distinguished themselves by their abilities, or been contented with the consciousness of superiority which they derived from the number of their vassals, and the extent of their estates. In the latter case, I have ever observed family pride to be the bane and ruin of the individuals who composed the inferior branches.

In them it gave rise to such absurd ideas of their own importance, as precluded all active exertion, and seldom failed to engender a spirit of malevolence against those who, without the same pretensions, had risen to superior consequence in the eyes of the community. Where, on the contrary, the chiefs of an ancient family have been distinguished by valour or talents, the pride of birth having been associated with an honourable exertion of the faculties, will be found to produce a superior degree of vigour throughout all the younger branches. It is thus that the actions of a remote ancestor may continue to operate in forming the character of those who scarcely preserve the remembrance of his name.

As the Hamiltons of Woodhall, not only boast of being *one* of the first of the Saxon *family* established in Scotland, but of being the stock whence all the branches that have been ennobled in these kingdoms, in France,

and in Germany, have sprung; it is probable that some such sentiment as that I have been describing gave an impulse to the energies of the race, which it never could have received from the extent of its possessions. Nor is this mere conjecture: the estate of Woodhall (now the seat of Mr. Campbell of Shawfield) was granted by a charter from Pope Honorius to one of my ancestors, "for good deeds done in the Holy Land," in the first croisade. Nor does it appear that the spirit which led this ancient chief to combat the enemies of the faith, was soon extinguished in the family.

In the reign of the Charleses it accommodated itself to the fashion of the times, and blazed out in zeal for the covenant, and hatred of episcopacy. My great grandfather, unable to endure with patience the establishment of the liturgy, left Scotland in discontent, and going over to Ireland with his family and a few chosen friends,

took up his residence in a remote part of Ulster, where he hoped to enjoy what was then called liberty of conscience. Though only a younger son, he took with him sufficient property to enable him to purchase a track of land, in the county of Monaghan, of such extent as, had his family been possessed of worldly *wisdom*, would have raised them to influence and distinction. But to perpetuate in his family a zeal for the covenant, was, in his eyes, an object of greater importance than to be the founder of a race. Of his numerous children, four sons only remained with him in Ireland, and to these he at his death bequeathed his fortune in nearly equal lots. A great part of the lands thus divided were, however, afterwards united by his grandson Sir James H——, who, following the example of his grandfather, has again divided them among his children. To my grandfather Charles no part of this property was assigned. He, at the age of fifteen, entered the army, and

went over to Scotland to join a regiment of cavalry, in which, through the interest of his friends, he expected quick promotion. To finish his education, he at the same time entered at the university of Edinburgh, where he acquired such a disrelish for a military life, as made him gladly relinquish the service for a civil appointment; soon after which he married a lady of distinguished beauty, and who possessed what was at that time deemed a very considerable fortune.

My grandmother, who, in manners and accomplishments, as well as in a taste for show and gaiety, seems to have anticipated the fashions of a succeeding age, resolved not to discredit her husband in the eyes of the world by an appearance inferior, in point of expense, to any of his great connections. She consequently vied with the people of rank among whom she lived; and, being much too fine a lady to be a good manager,

did not, as is often done, make up by secret deprivation for ostentatious display. In vain did her too indulgent husband remonstrate; in vain did he change his place of residence to different parts of the kingdom, in order to find a society with whom he might live on equal terms without exceeding his income. My poor grandmother did not understand reasoning; she piqued herself on being one of the best of wives, and most affectionate of mothers, and, in all the pride of virtue, ruined her family, and destroyed the peace of her husband.

Notwithstanding this proof of weakness, my grandfather was universally esteemed as a man of *worth* and sense. The greatest proof he, however, gave of his understanding, was in the assiduous care with which he cultivated the minds of his children in early life. His wife determined that her daughters should be accomplished — he wisely endeavoured to make them rational;

and so successfully were his efforts directed, that even the third generation have had reason to bless his memory.

My grandmother's fortune, which, at least, ought to have been secured as a provision to her family, had been gradually dissipated in paying the debts contracted by her habits of expense. Nothing now remained but the emoluments of office; and, unfortunately, my grandfather's employment gave such a command of money, as prevented the immediate feeling of embarrassment. The hour of conviction and of misery at length arrived.

My grandfather saw with horror the impossibility of answering the demands of government; and felt so deeply the stain that he had thus thrown on his honour, as to be unable to support the shock. In the agony of his soul, he went to his friend Mr. Basil Hamilton, to unburden his sorrows,

and to beseech him to break the distressing intelligence to his wife. With that goodness which was worthy the son of Lord Basil Hamilton*, and which has descended as an inheritance to his offspring, Mr. H. endeavoured to console his unhappy guest. He sat with him, after he had retired to his chamber, till after midnight, and went again to his apartment in the morning, to consult further on the steps he was to take. On drawing the curtains of his bed, he imagined him to be still asleep, with so little struggle had the perturbed spirit taken its everlasting flight! No death was ever more certainly occasioned by an excess of mental sensibility: but it was the goodness of God which thus removed him from a change of fortune he wanted fortitude to support. The eldest of his daughters thankfully accepted of an invitation from a rich aunt in Ire-

* Father to the late Earl of Selkirk. For an account of Lord B. H. see Dalrymple's Memoirs.

land, where she soon found herself looked on with an evil eye by the numerous relations who were competitors with her for the old lady's fortune. The fate of the younger was to me more peculiarly interesting. She had her mother's beauty, and her father's understanding, without any of her father's weakness. In her sixteenth year, she had made a conquest of the eldest son of Sir A. W.; nor did the baronet make any objection to the match, which, had my grandfather lived, would have taken place in a few months. His death made as great an alteration in the sentiments of the old gentleman, as in the circumstances of his family; and the lover, with true filial obedience, gave up his mistress, as soon as he was desired to seek a richer wife.

With talents of a superior order, and with an education such as few Scotch ladies could at that time boast of, my aunt ought not to have experienced any difficulty in

the attainment of independence. But for talents and accomplishments there was at that period no resource, — nothing upon which they could be employed to advantage; she was therefore glad to obtain protection in the house of a distant relation, and to repay this protection by those exertions for which she was eminently fitted by a superior education. Her situation was not, however, void of advantages. Lady G—— was a woman of great piety and extensive information: she had at Bath formed acquaintance with some distinguished characters, with whom she kept up a correspondence; and as she employed my aunt to write all her letters, gave her thus an opportunity of improving in sentiment and expression. Nor was the opportunity thrown away; for I have never met with the writer who could express so many ideas in so few words, with an equal degree of simplicity and elegance.

On the death of Lady G——, my aunt went with her daughter, Mrs. M ——, into Stirlingshire. This lady, though not equal to her mother in intellectual accomplishments, was nevertheless extremely amiable, possessing a compassionate temper, and charitable disposition. When in her sixteenth year, she had from her own choice married Mr. M——, then in the sixtieth year of his age: nor was this considered as a sacrifice either by herself or others, for the Laird of P —— had an estate which had been for many centuries in the family, a circumstance which was then considered as the chief object of glory; and such is the power of general sentiment, that there were probably few young ladies in Scotland who would then have dared to be so singular, or so romantic, as to have condemned her choice. That family-pride which my aunt had hitherto considered as a generous and dignified sentiment, and which she had from her cradle been taught

to cherish as a virtue, she now saw in a very different light, for she had now an opportunity of contemplating its effects, in giving self-importance to vulgarity and ignorance.

As the necessity of taking the oaths to government shut the door of all the liberal professions against the zealous adherents of the house of Stewart, the younger sons of old Jacobite families were often destined to employments that little corresponded with the high pretensions of their birth. All, however, considered themselves as still superior to the common race of mortals. Weavers, shoe-makers, tailors, all were cousins of the lairds; and, as such, presumed not a little on the high idea of their own importance. The letters written by my aunt to my father about this period, show how deeply she was affected by the mortifications to which she was now exposed;—mortifications which only ceased to wound

when she had obtained that perfect resignation to the Divine Will, which enabled her to read the dispensations of Infinite Goodness and Wisdom in all the events of her life. When the pride of the heart has been expelled by true Christian humility, half the evils of life are annihilated; — a truth, of which my good aunt was an eminent example.

It was not, however, without a severe struggle, that she obtained this conquest over herself, and over all the prejudices of her education. Nor till these were entirely subdued, could she bring herself to listen to the addresses of a man, born as Mr. Marshall was, in a very inferior station. Time, however, as it displayed the extraordinary virtues of this best of men, reconciled her by degrees to the thoughts of an alliance, which, though little gratifying to her pride, would, as she believed, secure her peace. Nor was she disappointed in

this expectation: nor in the two-and-thirty years that she afterwards lived with him did her heart ever experience even a momentary pang of vexation, sorrow, or regret. To Mr. Marshall might well be applied what the poet Burns has said of an Ayrshire friend, that "he held his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God." But, though the son of a peasant, he had received the advantage of an education superior to his birth; and as the seed that was thus sown fell into a grateful soil, the sentiments it inspired would have done honour to the most exalted station. Whatever repugnance my father might have felt at the idea of such a connection, he had too sound an understanding, and too liberal a mind, to take offence at his sister for consulting her own happiness. He had himself experienced the benefit of an early acquaintance with adversity; and though the vigour of his mind enabled him to assert the spirit of independence, he made

every allowance for the different circumstances under which his sister was placed, and generously offered to her and her husband all the assistance in his power, towards placing them in a situation equal to their wishes. Obliged, on my grandfather's death, to relinquish the pursuits most agreeable to his taste, my father had, immediately on that event, quitted the University, and gone to London with an intention of seizing the first opportunity of entering into business. Through the friendship of the elder Mr. A——, this opportunity soon offered. He was taken into the mercantile house of Messrs. A—— and J——, with the prospect ofsoon having his name added to the firm, and had reason to encourage the sanguine hope of speedily attaining such a fortune, as would enable him once more to enjoy that place in society, which, from his manners and accomplishments, he seemed destined to adorn. Had the air of London agreed with his constitution, these

prospects would soon have been realized; but, unfortunately, it proved so adverse to his health, as to render a continued residence there impossible. He, therefore, with a relation of Lord Macartney's, who was his particular friend, went over to Ireland, where, soon afterwards, he engaged in business. When in Dublin, on his way to Belfast, he went to visit a lady whom he had had the pleasure of seeing in London, and whom he had ever spoken of with enthusiasm, as the most sensible, and best informed of her sex. On going to her house, and enquiring if Miss Mackay was at home, he was answered in the affirmative, and conducted to the drawing-room; where he saw, not the Miss Mackay he was in search of, but a sister many years younger, who to all the understanding of the lady whose intellectual endowments had appeared to him so extraordinary, added all the attractions of beauty, and all the charms of grace. His heart was instantly captivated; and as

he was received by this lovely woman with the attention due to the friend of a sister, he entered into conversation with the ease of an old acquaintance, and soon discovered that the talents which nature had so liberally bestowed, had been as liberally cultivated by education. It may be easily imagined, that mutual esteem and admiration soon warmed into mutual love. The want of fortune seemed, for some time, to present an invincible obstacle to their union; but love brought hope, and confidence of future affluence, to support his cause, against the arguments of rigid prudence. They married; and if ever perfect happiness was enjoyed by married pair, that happiness was theirs.

Mutual esteem, and mutual respect, — a perfect congeniality of taste and temper, and sentiment, and principle, — cemented the bond of mutual tenderness.

The mercantile speculations into which my father had entered wore such a promising aspect as to leave him no fears of being able to provide for his rising family, whose infant smiles repaid him for all the exertions he had made, and for all the anxieties he had ever suffered; and as his health had, from the time of his leaving London, been uninterrupted, no cloud threatened to obscure the future prospect. Alas! no warning cloud prepared my unhappy mother for the fate that awaited her.*

[*The end of the Fragment.*]

The widow of Mr. Hamilton was a woman of rare endowments; but it required more than the firmness of her well-regulated mind, and all the energy of her religious principles to support with equanimity the fatal stroke by which she was not only thrown

* Mr. Hamilton died of a typhus fever in 1759.

from happiness, but plunged into care, embarrassment, and perplexity. In the following passage, extracted from a letter addressed to Mrs. Marshall, the state of her feelings is described with the most affecting simplicity. " Nobody that has not experienced the happiness that results from such a tender friendship, such an union of heart and soul as subsisted between us, can have any idea of what a tender heart must feel upon such a separation. He was torn from me in the prime of his life, cut off in the middle of his days, when I might have hoped for many years of happiness to come; but I will not distress you with a repetition of my sufferings upon the melancholy event. My great consolation is, that I am sure he is happy, if the best of tempers, the most unbounded benevolence of heart, the most sincere desire to do good and be useful in the world; — if the constant exercise of the best affections can entitle any one to happiness in another state, then he is happy." To supply to her

bereaved children the excellent parent they had lost, was the supreme object of this admirable woman's thoughts, the constant pursuit from which alone she was capable of receiving consolation. From her letters it is obvious that, like the mother of Sir William Jones, she considered a good education as the noblest patrimony; — a sentiment in which she was fortified by her elder brother *, who resided in her family, and, by his liberal spirit, his cultivated understanding, and amiable manners, essentially contributed to the happiness and

* The Reverend Mr. Mackay, many years minister to the first dissenting congregation established in Belfast. This gentleman's devotion to literature appears to have been a disinterested sentiment, unsullied by views of interest or ambition. By select friends and correspondents he was known and admired as an accomplished scholar; by his fellow-citizens he was honoured for manly independence; to his congregation he was endeared by piety and benevolence. Mr. Mackay was never married; in renouncing the selfishness, he had escaped the solitude of celibacy, and, in his declining years, received from Mrs. Hamilton's eldest daughter unremitted filial attention.

improvement of her children. Of these the eldest was her daughter Katherine, the peculiar object of her uncle's attention; the second was her son Charles, whom she described as the living image of her excellent husband; the youngest was Elizabeth, who, when only six years of age *, was surrendered to the care of Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, of whom a characteristic description has been given in the preceding Fragment. It was in the year 1762 that Mrs. Hamilton consented to this dismemberment of her family, not without some painful struggles between maternal fondness and a strict and exalted sense of maternal duty. Inured to self-denial, and rather fortified than subdued by adversity, she constantly evinced a magnanimous resolution to sacrifice every personal consideration to the future welfare of her children, and to hold every thing subordinate to their moral and religious improvement. In the management of her

* Born on 25th July, 1758, at Belfast.

son, she conscientiously resisted any indulgence, however acceptable to her own feelings, which was not sanctioned by her better judgment. An instance of this is not unworthy of notice. Having heard some complaints of her son's inattention to his tutors, she addressed to him the following remonstrance, which not only had the desired effect, but produced on his mind an impression which probably influenced his conduct in after life.

" Dear Charles,

" I am told that you are idle in school, and that if you applied yourself properly there, you would have no occasion to get any Latin at home. I am ashamed to hear you are inclined to trifle away your time, when you ought to be employed about your business: if you will not attend to it in school, you must be compelled to it when you are out of school; for I have too great a regard for you to sacrifice your improvement in any thing that may be useful to you,

to your appetite for play. You are not such a child as you were three or four years ago; you are now able to apply better, and there is, with reason and justice, more expected from you. You are now growing up to manhood, and you should consider what a shame it is to see a boy of your age trifling away that precious time which he ought to employ in laying up a stock of knowledge that may be of the greatest use to him in his future life, — sacrificing an important interest to a childish amusement. You have understanding enough to know that there is nothing aimed at by your master or me but your advantage. If you apply with diligence, you will reap all the benefit; if you be idle, the loss, the disgrace, and shame, will be all your own. If you carry your love of play so far as to neglect, for the sake of it, what it is necessary you should learn, it then becomes a vice, and ought to be corrected. I assure you I will never screen you from the frowns of your master, if I find you love pleasure better than im-

provement. If I have any reason to believe that to be the case, it will give me the most contemptible opinion of you, and I shall think I have bestowed great labour in vain. But I should gladly hope better things from you. I should rejoice to see that you acted right from right motives, and that you were influenced by something more generous and liberal than the fear of manual chastisement. The lash is applied to dogs and horses because they are incapable of reason, and cannot be managed without it; but never would a boy of a right spirit incur such a disgrace. If you behave yourself well, and apply diligently to your business, you will have your master's love and esteem, and mine will follow his, and you will have credit and honour from every body; and when you are a man, you will reap great advantage from your present labours. But if you lose the present opportunity it will never return; you will be despised by every body, and you will be fully sensible of your error when it is too

late to mend it. Take example by your sister. She is not a year and a half older than you, and in what respect does her behaviour differ from a woman's? When did you see her amuse herself with a childish diversion? When she is not employed about something necessary and useful, she entertains herself with a book for the improvement of her mind. I do not mean to cut you off from diversion altogether: you shall have sufficient time for recreation; but it must not interfere with your business. I desire you will copy over this letter in some of your spare hours, that it may make the deeper impression, and I hope you will give me the pleasure to see that it has a proper effect. I am, dear Charles, (if you behave well,) Your affectionate mother,

"K. H."

In 1764, Elizabeth, accompanied by her uncle and aunt, paid a visit to Belfast; and in 1766, her mother, then in a declining

state of health, passed part of the summer in Scotland, and for the last time saw her beloved child. The death of this excellent woman, in 1767, was severely felt by her two elder children; on Elizabeth the impression must have been slight and transient. Already attached with fondness to her parental protectors, she enjoyed all the happiness of which her age was susceptible, the privileges annexed to a rural residence — the comforts and endearments of a cheerful home — unbounded confidence in the affection — implicit faith in the wisdom and rectitude of those who constituted to her childish conception, the visible image of Providence.

Mr. Marshall resided in a solitary mansion near Stirling, where Elizabeth spent two years, not in learning tasks, but in receiving more instructive lessons from nature: fortunately she had a playmate of the other sex, by whose example she was stimulated

to feats of hardihood and enterprise, and, happy to escape restraint, she readily joined her companion in fording the burns in summer, or sliding over their frozen surface in winter. Mrs. Marshall, though sensible and accomplished, was no metaphysician; yet, in sanctioning these innocent pastimes, she realised all that has been suggested by an enlightened and eloquent philosopher on the subject of elementary education.

"When nature is allowed free scope," says Dugald Stewart, "the curiosity, dur-
"ing early youth, is alive to every ex-
"ternal object, and to every external oc-
"currence. Whenever a child contracts a
"disrelish for those amusements suited to
"its age, the best of all education is lost,
"which nature has prepared amidst the
"active sports and hazardous adventures
"of childhood. It is from these alone that
"we can acquire, not only that force of
"character which is suited to the more

" arduous situations of life, but that com-
" plete and prompt command of attention
" to things external, without which the
" highest endowments of the understand-
" ing, however they may fit a man for the
" solitary speculations of the closet, are but
" of little use in the practice of affairs, or
" for enabling him to profit by his personal
" experience."*

It will easily be imagined, that Elizabeth was indifferent to her doll: she was not,

* Mrs. Hamilton never read this passage without referring to her own happy childhood. Destined in the prime of life to become the victim of complicated and incurable disease, she retained, through many succeeding years of suffering and languor, the quick perception, the elastic spirit, the prompt decision, she had been permitted to acquire from the rural dissipation of her childhood. To her last moments the pupil and the lover of nature, the aspect of a beautiful country seemed to restore to her the energies of youth. When labouring under infirmity, her self-possession was not suspended; the active spirit invigorated the feeble frame; and she was often seen, with lame feet, but courageous steps, descending such declivities as few ladies, in the full possession of health and strength, would have attempted.

however, averse from all sedentary occupation. Previous to her arrival in Stirlingshire she had learnt to read with distinctness and propriety; and, under the tuition of Mrs. Marshall, became an adept in this rare accomplishment. In books she soon discovered a substitute even for a playmate: her first hero was Wallace, with whom she became enamoured, by learning to recite Blind Harry's Lays. Two or three of Shakspeare's historical plays came in her way; the history of England followed. She happened to meet with Ogilvie's translation of Homer's Iliad, and soon learnt to idolize Achilles, and almost to dream of Hector.

Having completed her eighth year, it was judged necessary that she should be habituated to regular application. In the town of Stirling there were many day-schools; but as the distance of four miles precluded daily attendance, Mrs. Marshall adopted the expedient of boarding her

niece, from Monday to Saturday, with a female friend, from whose house she could easily attend the best seminaries that Stirling afforded. In this new situation she was accompanied by a young girl (Isabel Irvine) in the capacity of a servant, to whom she became much attached, and whose instruction afterwards formed one of her voluntary studies. It may shock the fastidiousness of modern refinement to hear that it was a *master* who presided over the school to which Elizabeth was introduced; but it should be remembered, that about fifty years ago this practice prevailed universally in Scotland, Ireland, and even some parts of England; nor was it unusual to see boys and girls associated in their tasks, with no other separation than the being seated on different forms. Mr. Manson's school at Stirling* was either devoted exclusively to girls, or opened alternately

* It is a curious circumstance, that a Mr. Manson of Belfast kept a school on a similar plan, and that the sister of Mrs. Hamilton was one of his pupils.

for girls and for boys; * and it was a subject of regret to Mrs. Hamilton, in after life, that she had not been allowed to learn the classics under so competent an instructor. To writing, geography, and the use of the globes, she applied with much assiduity, and with a degree of success that delighted her master, who, in a poem written forty years after, reverted, with generous pride, to the period when Elizabeth Hamilton had been his pupil. Exclusively of the three hours of daily tuition from Mr. Manson, she attended the dancing-school, and soon became passionately fond of the exercise. It was not till the en-

* Why should not day-schools on a similar plan be established under female superintendence? The division of labour would be attended with incalculable advantage to the *instructors* and the *instructed;* and a respectable source of emolument might thus be opened to many women of high intellectual attainments, who, if they happen not to be professors in music, are now left to languish in poverty and neglect. Two or three distinguished women might confer an essential benefit on society, by lending their patronage to such a plan of tuition.

suing year that she learnt French, to which she afterwards added drawing and music.

With such various avocations, she could experience neither weariness nor disgust during her absence from home; yet the return of Saturday was always anticipated with ardour, and the arrival of old Lochaber, the horse which was to convey her from Stirling, hailed with unspeakable delight. Saturday night was a festival, since she had then to relate all the adventures of the week to those she loved, and could not but perceive how much they were exhilarated by her presence: Sunday also had a large portion of enjoyment not wholly unalloyed with care. No sooner was the morning meal dispatched, than the whole family prepared to attend public worship. After morning service they procured some slight refreshment; and thus recruited, returned to the Kirk, or Chapel, for a second sermon. In the evening Elizabeth had often to repeat a long elaborate task extracted from the

now obsolete page of scholastic divinity, which must have been better calculated to exercise the memory than to call forth the devotional affections. *

Although the mature judgment of Mrs. Hamilton condemned a practice which had sometimes thrown a gloom over her happy childhood, she always dwelt with gratitude and delight on the blended sanctity and simplicity, the mingled strictness and liberality which prevailed in her uncle's family. Mr. Marshall attended an Episcopalian Chapel; his wife conformed

* To this system Mrs. Hamilton alludes in her Letters on Education; where she says, — "My recollection, I candidly confess, does not furnish me with a single instance of improvement from any of the didactic compositions I was obliged to get by heart; and yet these were all as judiciously chosen as possible. Often did my dear and amiable instructress listen with mingled solicitude and delight to my seneless, though accurate, recitation of passages, which excited in her mind a train of ideas very different from those raised in mine. Had she stopped here, had she contented herself, as many do, with this one mode of religious instruction, it is probable that the importance of religious principle would now have appeared to me in a very different light."

to the Kirk; but the bigotry of sectarism and the rancour of party were to both unknown; and to their hospitable roof the Episcopalian, the Nonjuror, and the Presbyterian, were equally welcome. To the example, still more than the precepts, of her excellent friends, Mrs. Hamilton always referred the formation of her own moral and religious sentiments.

An ardent love of virtue is seldom found to exist in the heart that preserves not, among the consecrated relics of infancy, the impression of some venerable image, once invested with almost divine attributes, of whom it would have been sacrilege to harbour suspicion, and impiety to whisper blame. The years of childhood were, to Mrs. Hamilton, years of unalloyed happiness; and she has described these unsophisticated pleasures with a spirit and simplicity which mark how deeply they were impressed on her memory. The following lines are extracted from a poem called Christmas:—

Blest season, hail! tho' now, alas! no more
Array'd by hope, thou com'st to smile upon me,
As thou wert wont in youth's gay morn to come,
When every hour was pregnant with delight,
And life itself, and all its scenes were new.
Then Christmas was indeed a time of bliss,
Much long'd for, welcomed with a dancing heart,
Light bounding at the thoughts of promised joy —
Joys sweet in promise, in enjoyment sweet;
For then from school, and school restraints set free,
Where hearts and arms were open to receive me;
Dear home! abode of love and heartfelt bliss,
Temple of peace, where discord never entered
With jarring note, to untune domestic harmony;
At thoughts of thee, the tear of fond remembrance
Steals with sad pleasure down this faded cheek.
There the kind feast of hospitality
Was spread by charity and Christian love;
There my young heart first learned the bliss of blessing.
When from my little hands the rustic hinds
Received the Christmas-boon, their grateful transport
Taught me to prize the peasant's simple joys.
There, little mistress of the fairy revels,
I led the infant groups of tiny friends;
Prescribed the play, or shared the fruit delicious;
The feast, the sport — all rendered doubly dear
By the sweet consciousness of fond indulgence.

In a letter, written long after this poem, Mrs. Hamilton gives a description, equally vivid, of the virtues which prevailed in her

uncle's family.—"My aunt, the mistress of the mansion, had received from her father such an education as few females in Scotland were at that period favoured with; nor have I ever met with a mind at once so gentle and so strong. Her father's death had thrown her on the world, or rather on heaven; for to heaven all her thoughts were directed. Yet by her letters, I perceive, that it was not without a struggle, that she so far conquered all worldly views and prejudices, as to unite herself to a man who was her inferior in birth, though entitled to rank with the greatest of the great, in virtue.

"By this worthy couple I was adopted, and educated with a care and tenderness that has been seldom equalled. No child ever spent so happy a life; nor, indeed, have I ever met with any thing at all resembling the way in which we lived, except the description given by Rousseau of Wolmar's farm and vintage. Disgust at the unkindness of some of the former friends of her family, had induced my aunt to with-

draw herself from those connections who might have introduced me into notice. She wished me to be self-dependent; and, consequently, taught me to value myself upon nothing that did not strictly belong to myself, nor upon any thing that did, which was in its nature perishable. All her views, as I have already said, extended beyond this transitory scene. The same standard by which I was to judge myself, I was to apply to others, but with more allowance; as, instead of blaming people for their actions or sentiments, I was to endeavour to discover and avoid the erroneous principles in which they had their source."

In her thirteenth year, Elizabeth was re-established at home, where her kind aunt had engaged a female friend to assist her progress in music and drawing. A circumstance occurred at this period, of which, as she has alluded to it in various passages of her works, it may be proper to offer some explanation. It happened, that there was

an intimate of the family who took some pains to shake the foundation of her religious principles. The attack was the more dangerous, as it approached in the form of ridicule; and she had from nature that quick sense of the ridiculous which often misleads its possessor. The sceptical arguments to which she listened were new, and therefore inflamed curiosity, while they perplexed inexperience: they had also the attraction of a certain specious liberality, always inviting to a youthful imagination. Still Elizabeth found it difficult to believe that her aunt, wise and good as she was, could be the dupe of error. To terminate this state of doubt, which to her ardent temper was insupportable, she took the prompt resolution of reading the scriptures by stealth, and deciding the question from her own unbiassed judgment. The result of this examination was, a conviction of their truth; and she observed that the moral precepts connected with the doctrines of Christianity,

were too pure to have been promulgated by an impostor.*

It does not appear that this first effort of moral independence produced any important change in conduct. Her native talents are said to have been always conspicuous; her ardent temper might not have brooked arbitrary control; but to that she was never subjected: it was not to authority that she was required to submit, but to reason. Her good aunt, either suspecting she was growing too fond of books, or fearing lest she should not be sufficiently attentive to external accomplishments, allowed her to be absent some months on a visit to Glasgow and Edinburgh; which afforded opportunities for receiving lessons from various

* From a passage in one of her early letters, it appears, that at this period the young enquirer had been somewhat inflated with the idea of her own importance; but she was herself the first to detect and correct the error.

masters. But the greatest advantage she derived from this visit, was an introduction to the noted Dr. Moyse, who was then giving a course of lectures on experimental philosophy. The acquaintance thus accidentally commenced, was afterwards cultivated by a literary correspondence, in which the lecturer liberally undertook to direct the studies of his youthful pupil. In after life, it was often a subject of regret to her, that she had not devoted to classical or scientific pursuits the time unprofitably wasted in music.

During an interval of three or four years, she had been precluded from all personal intercourse with her nearest relatives. At length she was gratified by seeing her brother, who, having completed his academical education, under the Rev. Mr. Garnet of Belfast, spent two years in Dublin, struggling against his repugnance to mercantile pursuits, and finally determined

to embrace the military profession. His visit to Scotland was a source of unspeakable satisfaction to Elizabeth, who found in her brother, not merely a companionable friend, but an object of enthusiastic attachment, — a director for her studies, — an oracle to whom she was proud to yield implicit obedience.

Mr. Hamilton and his sister parted with a mutual promise of correspondence, to which both adhered with inviolable fidelity; and this epistolary intercourse soon became to Miss Hamilton a *second* education, in some respects, perhaps, more important than any preceding course of instruction. A seniority of nearly five years authorised the brother to assume with the sister the tone of a paternal monitor; nor would the valedictory letter she received from him previously to his leaving Europe, have discredited the wisdom and experience of a real parent.

Early in 1772, Mr. Hamilton having obtained a Cadetship in the East India Company's service, sailed from Europe, nearly at the same time that Mr. Marshall and his family removed to the beautiful little cottage at Ingram's Crook, — a romantic spot, ennobled by its vicinity to the celebrated stream of Bannockburn.* From the commencement of her residence at Ingram's Crook, Miss Hamilton may be supposed to have completed the circle of school attainments, to have suspended her lessons, and dismissed her masters.

* It received the name of Ingram's Crook, from the circumstance of Sir John Ingram, an English knight, having, in his flight from the battle of Bannockburn, been driven into the stream, where he perished. The stream, bending at that spot, forms a small peninsula, adjoining to which Mr. Marshall's habitation was built; a neat thatched cottage, which, during the summer, was covered to the chimney top with woodbines and roses: enclosed within a court, it formed a picturesque object, just peeping from the embowering shades of the orchards, and other plantations.

It must be considered as none of the least of the advantages of her situation, that she had attracted no admiration, acquired no factitious tastes, imbibed no improper sentiments, and witnessed only the purest examples of religion and virtue. If her mind was not enriched by cultivation, its independence was unfettered, its energy unsubdued. In ardour she possessed an incentive to exertion, in perseverance an earnest of success.

Without literary pretensions, Mrs. Marshall had a genuine love of reading, and when no other engagement intervened, it was one of her domestic regulations, that a book should be read aloud in the evening for general amusement; the office of reader commonly devolved on Miss Hamilton, who was thus led to remark that the best prose style was always that which could be longest read without exhausting the breath. These social studies were far from satisfying her

avidity for information; and she constantly perused many books by stealth. Mrs. Marshall, on discovering what had been her private occupation, expressed neither praise nor blame, but quietly advised her to avoid any display of superior knowledge, by which she might be subjected to the imputation of pedantry. This admonition produced the desired effect, since, as she herself informs us*, she once hid a volume of Lord Kaims's Elements of Criticism under the cushion of a chair, lest she should be detected in a study which prejudice and ignorance might pronounce unfeminine.

In the correspondence of Miss Hamilton, it will appear that she considered herself as having received an education superior to what is usually allotted to her sex and station, since she had learned to *think;* but, in reality she did more; for, on most subjects, she learned to think justly, — an at-

* See her letters to Mr. M'Neill.

tainment not often made by those who are debarred from the privilege of communicating their thoughts. The early consciousness of superiority, incident to the solitude of an education altogether domestic, is in general baneful to future improvement; but Miss Hamilton was impressed with the superior talents and attainments of her brother, whose description of their eldest sister had completely captivated her imagination, and, instead of attaching importance to her own accomplishments, she was constantly occupied in contemplating the excellence of these, her nearest relatives, which appeared to her a model beyond the reach of her imitation.

Like many other solitary *thinkers*, Miss Hamilton was irresistibly impelled to become a writer. She had recourse to the pen by stealth, but accident divulged her secret. Having been permitted to join a party going to the Highlands, she kept, for

her aunt's amusement, a journal, to which she gave the appropriate title of a Highland Tour. Mrs. Marshall showed the manuscript to one of the party, who, in the warmth of his admiration, sent it to a provincial magazine, in which it appeared to the unspeakable dismay of the youthful writer, who, in thus becoming the object of curiosity and criticism to her neighbours, had a foretaste of the pains and pleasures attending celebrity. Her next essay was of a different character. In reading the annals of her own country, she had been touched with the hard fate of Lady Arabella Stuart; and, either to extend her knowledge, or amuse her fancy, collected much miscellaneous information respecting her, which she afterwards cast into the form of a historical novel: — the subject was happily chosen; enough was known of the heroine to excite interest, and too little detailed to circumscribe invention. In this little fragment, the manners of the times are repre-

sented with an accuracy which proves how judiciously and successfully the writer had applied to the study of history. The unity of her fable is compromised by the introduction of two sisters, who supplant the heroine in the reader's affections; but to this digression she was seduced by the facility of the epistolary style, and by the natural impulse of the youthful heart, to trace some record of its secret feelings. The two sisters have been separated from infancy, one of them instructed with Arabella in Protestant principles, the other educated by her father in the tenets of the Romish church. Almeria, the friend of Arabella, is at length recalled home, where she no sooner sees her sister Matilda, than they are attached by the strictest ties of friendship. It is easy to detect, in this situation, a coincidence with that of the writer; the original of Matilda is evidently that sister from whom she had been so long divided, and to whom she ardently wished to be

re-united. The following extract will enable the reader to judge of her style and sentiment at this early age. The *Scotticisms* are retained: — it should be remembered that she wrote without either guide, critic, or instructor.

Letter the first, from Arabella.

" I would be loth to wound the gentle heart of my sweet friend, or to damp the scene of festivity she is about to celebrate, by a minute description of what I have suffered since our truly sorrowful parting; but as my dear Almeria's heart was always wont to answer every feeling of mine, I doubt not she has had her share of sorrow. I feel as if deprived of part of my existence, and the blank I every where experience, is what no company, no amusement can supply. Not a walk about all the lovely shades of ——— but recals the image of my sweet companion; nor can I open a book without

regret, when I reflect that I can no longer hear the sentiments of the author refined and purified by those of my friend. My worthy guardian has never ceased his kind endeavours to divert my mind; and sure it were ingratitude in me, not to appear sensible of his goodness: he hopes the amusement of the ensuing season (Christmas) will rouse my spirits from melancholy, and for that purpose has invited more company than usual. His cousin, Sir Philip Mowbray, and his family, are to be with us from London, accompanied by Sir ———, a relation I have never yet seen, who is just returned from his travels, and bears the character of a very accomplished gentleman. In the present state of my spirits, the prospect of so much gaiety affords me little satisfaction; how much happier should I be, my dear Almeria, with thee, to shade a flower, or raise a tree in our artificial garden. I yesterday gave the finishing stroke to our laborious, but agreeable task,

the Armada; to-morrow it goes for London, and will, on New-Year's Day, be presented to the Queen: shall I confess to you, that I am now sorry to part with it, not from any grudge on account of its value — for were it fifty times as much, I should be happy to lay it at the feet of my sovereign; but were it to remain with me (don't call me childish for the thought), I should find in it a pleasant remembrance of many innocent and happy days: every sketch in it would call to mind a thousand agreeable circumstances of what we were conversing on at such a part; what happened at another; what improvement we were receiving in listening to the most renowned authors, while our fingers were employed in delineating a conquest which will shine brighter in the annals of England, than any Rome could ever boast of."

In this little work, every circumstance is strictly appropriate to the period it de-

scribes ; yet the language is perfectly modern and simple. It was, perhaps, an indication of good taste, not to attempt, by the introduction of obsolete or quaint phrases, to counterfeit the character of a departed age.

In reply to Arabella, Almeria relates the disastrous adventures of her journey, which at length terminates with her safe arrival at her father's magnificent castle. " Night overtook us before we reached the castle ; but we were not now in any danger of losing our road, being met by a large party of my father's tenants and domestic retainers, who escorted us home ; we were welcomed by these humble friends with all imaginable civilities, which my father received with all the stateliness of chieftain pride. In proportion as the distance between us diminished, my impatience increased to behold a sister from whom I had been severed from infancy, but the fond

remembrance of whose affection, at that early period, still dwells upon my mind, like the indistinct idea of a distant dream. At length we arrived, and in the covered porch at the entrance of the castle, this dear sister appeared to receive us; she first bent her knee to our father, who blessed and embraced her with his wonted solemnity; then turning to me, who stood with open arms to receive her, she folded me to her heart, while sobs and tears were the only language in which we could speak our mutual affection: at the first look, all apprehensions of her having imbibed a tincture of prejudice vanished; the tenderness and sensibility that beamed from her sweet eyes, and overspread her countenance, convinced me that she had a heart superior to the mean prejudices of superstitious zeal. Being much fatigued with my journey, I begged to be excused from supping in the public hall; and my sister having obtained leave, conducted me to her apartment,

which she requested I would share with her; here we renewed our expressions of the mutual pleasure we enjoyed at meeting, and indulged ourselves in a thousand natural and fond enquiries, till the greatest part of the night had imperceptibly slipt away, I having forgot my fatigue, and she, that she had enjoined silence and repose."

In a succeeding letter, the introduction of Shakspeare *in propria persona* affords the writer an opportunity of showing her enthusiastic admiration of his genius,

Arabella writes to Almeria, " I could not help showing that part of your letter to Mr. William Shakspeare, who arrived here yesterday on his way from Stratford : he had not been informed of your departure till I saw him, and expressed his regret in such terms of high encomium as could not fail to be pleasing to your friend. " You " will remember, lady," said he, after some pause, " a conversation that passed the last

" time I had the pleasure of seeing you " and your fair companion, on female " friendship; I then promised to make " you some amends for the many severe " sarcasms thrown out by the wits of the " present day on that subject, and here I " have done something by way of keeping " my word;" so saying, he presented me the enclosed poem, with which, to avoid interruption, I retired to my own chamber. The delight and admiration with which I perused every page of this charming poem, I will not attempt to describe, but you will feel it all yourself in reading the enclosed. This man has surely something more than genius — it is like inspiration: I think he must have dived into my heart, and from thence have stolen some of the sentiments. How much are we obliged to him for that description he puts into the mouth of Celia!

> If she be a traitor — why so am I.
> We still have slept together;
> We still went coupled and inseparable.

The very title of, As you Like It, is a compliment; but the sweet character of the two cousins is a still greater compliment."

Let it be remembered, that these passages are from the unpractised pen of a self-cultivated girl, lively, ardent, and enthusiastic; — loving pleasure, and pursuing it, whenever it offered, with all the susceptibility of youth and youthful spirits.

It is probable that the early effusions of Miss Hamilton were chiefly in verse; for, in the letters of the Hindoo Rajah, it is said of her prototype, Charlotte Percy, that she had been accustomed from the dawn of youth to string the pearls of poetry. These artless effusions were long uncommunicated. For her brother she felt an almost religious reverence; of her sister she had only a faded recollection: but she was constantly occupied in anticipations of the meeting that was still deferred and still desired. In a letter to her brother she ex-

plains the causes of her frequent disappointment.

To Charles Hamilton, Esq.

1778.

" In my last I informed you of the disappointment I had again met with in my hopes of revisiting old Ireland. It vexed me greatly at the time it happened; but since that period I have often been glad that I did not go, as my aunt has been several times very ill: her health is so precarious, that I think it would in some measure be abusing her goodness, did I leave her for any time: were she to be ill in my absence, every one would blame me, though none so severely as I should accuse myself. I suppose the fate of the gallant General Burgoyne and his little army will have reached you before this time: it threw a general damp over the spirits of the whole kingdom, which has been succeeded, at least in Scotland, by such a zeal to show

their loyalty, that all our principal towns have given the most substantial proof of their approbation of the war, and their confidence in the ministry, — by making large subscriptions, and raising regiments to serve in America. The town of Edinburgh, exclusive of Leith and the suburbs, has already subscribed 8000*l.*; Glasgow as much. Dundee and several other towns are following their example; and the Dukes of Hamilton, Athol, Argyle, are to raise regiments. However, many people, who some time ago affected to despise the united force of America, are beginning to see, that it will not be such an easy matter as was at first imagined, to bring them to their allegiance, or even to conclude a peace upon honourable terms."

To the same.

1778.

" The last time I addressed my beloved brother, I had given up all hopes of the

happiness I have since enjoyed in visiting old Ireland. All my schemes for bringing about that long wished-for expedition had proved so unsuccessful, that I was obliged to lay all further thought of prosecuting them aside, and to content myself with the uncertain prospect of receiving a visit from my sister, when a letter from ——— threw me into the greatest agitation: it contained a proposal for my immediately accompanying him to Ireland. I got his letter at night; next day he and his pupil came at three o'clock to dinner. It was not till after their arrival that I obtained the full consent of my good aunt and uncle to go with them. I had not above half an hour to make myself ready, for an expedition which I had been thinking of for some years. Our journey was agreeable; our passage by Port Patrick pleasant: but my meeting with my dear sister you will be better able to imagine from your own feelings, than I can possibly describe. It

was too much for us both. For my share, I had a sort of dread that I should be waked out of the pleasing dream into which I had fallen ; it was some time before I could convince myself of its reality.

" It is now above three months that I have had the felicity of enjoying the company of the dearest of sisters, the kindest of friends, and laying all partiality aside, the most amiable and sensible companion I have ever met with. We want nothing but the company of our dear Charles to make us truly happy.—The spirit of volunteering has seized most of the gentlemen here: they have divided themselves into two companies, and go through the military manœuvres wonderfully well. The fears of every one are now much in the alarm about the French war. The opinion that most people entertain, of the superiority of our countrymen by sea, had raised our hopes and expectations of a complete victory ; and the account we received a few days ago from Admiral Kep-

pel, of an engagement, where the loss on our side has been considerable, and the advantage very uncertain, has thrown a sort of damp on every one's spirits. I am not apt to view things on the gloomy side; so I hope we shall yet be superior to our enemies, and make them once more feel the vengeance of the British flag.

" It is the opinion of many politicians, that the French will visit our dominions in the eastern world. Heaven protect my dearest brother

" From the little observation I have had it in my power to make, I believe happiness and misery to be very equally divided among us poor mortals; for I never see those who have been particularly exempted from misfortunes, but they make it up to themselves by misery of their own creating."

Of the perfect sympathy that subsisted between this brother and sister, independently of the fraternal relation, an extract

from Mr. Hamilton's answer to this letter offers a pleasing proof.

" I have been exceedingly pleased with " both your last letters, particularly your " account of your Irish *trip*. You cannot " imagine how I enjoyed the meeting be- " tween you and Kate: I conceived myself " present at it, and partook of your mutual " emotion. In fact, such a scene cannot " be enjoyed above once or twice in a life- " time, and almost overbalances all the re- " grets and solicitudes attending the most " tedious separation; our feelings on such " occasions are sufficient to make us wil- " lingly compound for the want of perfect " happiness in this world, as we then find " how incapable we are of bearing it."

To Charles Hamilton, Esq.

1780.

" My jaunt to Ireland fully answered my expectations as to the pleasure I had pro-

mised myself from it; and the six months I spent there, I believe I shall always consider as one of the happiest periods in my life. During that time, I made a great number of agreeable acquaintances; and I can't help thinking, that in general our country people have a more pleasing manner, and a more liberal, enlarged way of thinking, than those of the same station in this kingdom: I say the same station; for when you pass a certain rank, I believe the manners are pretty much the same every where.—I was extremely happy to find my sister more than answer the ideas I had formed of her. In person, indeed, she was not in the least like what I had imagined: she was neither so tall nor slender as I expected; and from her looks, she might have been with me a twelvemonth without my discovering her to be *my* Katherine. But her good sense and her fine sentiments, and sensibility of temper, altogether formed her for the friend I wanted, and had long

wished to meet with. Her affection for me made her consider me in the same light; and though I acknowledged myself her inferior in many things, I will not yield to her in affection and warmth of heart for those I love.—Although when I went to Ireland, I only intended making a few weeks' stay there, the time flew so pleasantly away, that some months had passed before I ever thought of returning; but as the winter approached, I began to be uneasy at my absence from my aunt. On my return, I was happy to find her better than she had been when I left her. We were all very happy to meet, after the longest absence I have ever made from them. The more I see of other people, the better I think of my worthy uncle. He has one of the best hearts that ever warmed a human breast: his very peculiarities and oddities of temper have something of worth.—I believe I have not yet told you who my fellow-travellers were: the one was Mr. ———, and

the other an Indian acquaintance of your's, Mr. A. In the month of May he came to see my sister and me; and you may be sure his visit was very acceptable, as he had seen you in India. As he brought nobody to introduce him, we were all at first a little at a loss, when he addressed me as Miss Hamilton: he thought you had but one sister, and from my resemblance to you, he said he should have known me as such any where. Indeed, many people at Belfast complimented me with the name of *little Charles.* I was always very well pleased to be told of this likeness, though my Aunt Marshall does not take it so well; for she says, that a 'tweel I'm muckle *better faur'd.* Have you still Scotch enough to make out that sentence?

" I have some hopes that while you are at Calcutta, you will have an opportunity of sending me, what I have so long wished for — your picture. You may be sure you shall have mine, when in my power to get

it: but, in the mean time, you may take your looking-glass, and the face you will see there may serve to bring your Bess to your mind. Mr. A — used all his rhetoric to persuade us to take a trip to India, to pay you a visit. Indeed, from his representation, it were well worth one's while to traverse the globe to arrive at such a blessed country; and we both said, that, but for the strong ties of duty to those who have been more than parents to us, we should willingly follow his advice. But, for my own part, I would much rather have our happy meeting in Scotland."

The following extract not only evinces the sincerity of her attachment, but the candour of a most ingenuous mind.

"By your two last letters I was sorry to find that you seem offended at some expressions I had inadvertently dropped; wishing that the rectitude of your heart and manners might remain untainted amidst

the general depravity of both, which is acknowledged to prevail in the world: but you may be assured that any thing of that kind, which has ever fallen from my pen, was more the dictate of a warm zeal for your welfare, than from any fears of your acting improperly in any situation you could possibly be placed in. I begin to fear that my dear Charles imagines he has got a little starched, cynical prude for his youngest sister. If this idea has a place in your mind, for goodness' sake discard it as fast as possible: for I assure you nothing can be more erroneous. I find I have faults enough of my own to correct, without meddling with those of my neighbours, a vice which I detest, as the sure proof of a little mind, and a bad heart. I have always found myself in more danger of being forsaken by my prudence than my spirits. I do all I can to make the one balance the other; but the latter often wins the victory all I can do, and leads me into a thousand

petites fautes, though I may be thankful the other never let me go astray. When I next have the happiness of seeing my dearest Charles, if you do not find me so perfect as I could wish, with all my faults I hope you will still find me worthy of your esteem and friendship. Of your affection I am not so unhappy as ever to form a doubt. By reading and retirement I have acquired a greater habit of thinking than most people at my time of life ; but the warmth and gaiety of my temper will effectually preserve me from melancholy, or that reserved, affected superiority, which is far oftener the substitute for good sense, than the result of it."

It was in the year 1780 that Miss Hamilton was deprived of her excellent aunt; an event to which she always referred as the first sorrow of her life. Not long before the death of this admirable woman, the sister of Miss Hamilton had married Mr. Blake the younger, of Oran Castle;

with whom, on his quitting the army, she paid a visit to Stirlingshire. No transition could be more melancholy than that which took place soon after her departure from Ingram's Crook, to her afflicted sister.

Mr. Marshall preserved his health and strength unimpaired, although he had arrived at an age which requires domestic indulgence. Accustomed to active occupation, he persisted in taking his morning walks around the farm, but on his return, looked for the youthful companion who now presided at his table, and whose absence could not be supplied by any friend or neighbour, however intimate or confidential. Sensible that he was too generous to impose or even to sanction the sacrifice of her pleasures, she took a resolution to refuse every invitation in which he was not included. An occasional excursion to Glasgow or Edinburgh was the only deviation she made from this plan ; and for the first six years

after Mrs. Marshall's death, she scarcely absented herself from Ingram's Crook unaccompanied by her uncle. In her own department she established the most perfect order and regularity; and the evidence of two contemporary friends warrants the assertion, that Ingram's Crook, under the superintendence of Miss Hamilton, realised the *beau ideal* of domestic economy which, in her Harriet Orwell, is thus presented to imitation: —

"It was now past twelve o'clock; already had the active and judicious Harriet performed every domestic task; and, having completely regulated the family economy for the day, was quietly seated at work with her aunt and sister, listening to Hume's History of England, as it was read to her by some orphan girl, whom she had herself instructed."

Conscious that such an assertion would provoke contradiction, the author thus challenges her female opponent: —

" Be so good as fairly to set down every day the time employed in repeating directions imperfectly given, or in revoking those that were given improperly; the time wasted in again looking at that which you have looked at before; the time thrown away in peeping into corners without object or end in view; the time mis-spent in perplexing your domestics with contradictory orders; and the time abused in scolding them." *

To Charles Hamilton, Esq.

1780.

" While it pleases Heaven to spare my worthy uncle, I shall never want a parent and a protector; and, from the soundness of his constitution, and the vigour of his health, I have room to hope that many years may be added to his truly valuable life. I ever felt the most sincere filial af-

* *Vide* Modern Philosopher.

fection for him; but his behaviour to me, since my aunt's death, has endeared him to me more than ever. He treats me with the affection of a father, and all the confidence of a friend. He leaves every thing entirely to my management within doors, and expresses approbation of every thing I do. Indeed, I never take a step without his advice. I exert my utmost power to make him easy and happy. I believe there are few houses where the Genius of Concord and Peace reigns more uninterruptedly than in our little mansion: we still keep up a social intercourse with all our neighbours, among whom are many worthy, and some very agreeable people. There is a stiffness of behaviour, a deficiency of taste and sentiment, which reigns through the generality of the inhabitants of a little town, that is quite inimical to the Genius of Friendship. Not that I would measure people's merit by their birth or fortune, or even by their education; for, in the little

I have seen of the world, I have observed that a vulgarity of soul and sentiment is sometimes possessed by such as most pique themselves on their gentility; but there is still something which marks the genuine feelings of a good heart and well-formed mind.

"I hope the young lady who accompanies this will not be a disagreeable visitor: she at least will not be a troublesome one. Could she but speak for her original, how many things would she have to tell you that it is impossible to write! and how many questions would you have to put to her! I almost envy the senseless thing, when I think that in a few months you will be examining its features with all the feelings of true brotherly affection. I don't know if you remember me well enough to trace the likeness: it was taken by the first miniature painter in Scotland; and I think he has done all the justice the subject admits of. What would I not give

if I could have you an inmate of our mansion! Your company, if it did not transform our cottage to an absolute palace, would make it the abode of more happiness than is usually to be found in one. How comfortably, how contentedly might we live together in this sweet little spot! You disclaim every ambitious view for yourself; and to me you forcibly recommend contentment with my humble lot. Why then continue in a splendid banishment from every tender relation — from all the charities of life, as you yourself express it — when, even with your present fortune, you might here enjoy peace, ease, and independence? You blame me for repining at the solitude in which my lot is cast. If I have ever done so, it is not that I have been dazzled with the glare of greatness, or that I have not the most thorough convictions of the insufficiency of fortune to confer felicity. I gratefully feel and acknowledge the happiness of my own situation, which I have

ever thought was very great: nor do I know one with whom, in all points, I would exchange it. Yet I confess I have sometimes sighed after the pleasure that society affords, — society, I mean, with the more polished and refined part of the species. Of all the pleasures in the train of fortune, I think the company it gives the opportunity of choosing, is the most attractive. The ideas, the conversation of people in a certain style of life — of people who have never mixed in company, nor improved by books, cannot fail to be frequently disgusting to a mind of delicacy. Pride, vulgarity, and ignorance, are, I believe, in some degree, to be met with in all stations; but in people of a genteel education the rougher particles are so polished, as not to give offence, while, in those of an inferior station, they appear in all their native deformity.

To the same.

1781.

" I can't tell you the many different thoughts I have had about the hint you give me of your intention to take a trip overland to Britain. It has been the foundation of many a stately castle in the air, raised in as many various forms as my imagination has painted the scene of our first interview. My uncle says I ought not to wish for your coming over until your affairs are in such a situation as to allow of your staying for good and all; but I cannot restrain my impatience by such prudential considerations. I wish with my whole heart that you may be now on your way to us, even though we should be obliged once more to part.

" I was somewhat disappointed at not receiving the most acceptable present you tell me you had prepared for me, by the last fleet. I hope it will arrive in safety by the next, and that I shall have the plea-

sure of deciding from the picture, of the justice you have done the original in your description. I can scarce form an idea of you, with that alteration in your features, and the supplemental black beard you describe: but still your figure presents itself to my imagination in the same stripling form it bore nine years ago. I still remember your looks in various attitudes. I sometimes see you in a brown study, sometimes playing on the flute, and sometimes sitting by the fire-side, chatting with gaiety and good-humour: (when shall we again be in that situation?) I shall be very much disappointed if any accident deprives me of my expected picture, unless I have the pleasure of seeing the original. Many thanks also for the muslin which you mention for a wedding *suit*. If it is to be laid up for that occasion, I don't think it need be in any hurry; but if it arrive in safety, I shall perhaps use the freedom of wearing it beforehand."

To the same.

1781.

" After a silence of about six months, I again take up the pen to address my dearest brother. Never did I experience greater anxiety on your account than I now feel. I wrote twice after the date of your last two letters, which is all that I have received for near two years. They, indeed, afforded me the most heart-felt satisfaction, both from the favourable accounts they brought me of your health and spirits, and the fraternal affection which they so warmly breathed. Of that affection, indeed, I never had reason to entertain a doubt; but every new instance I receive of it elates my heart in a manner that can only be felt.

" I have almost lost hopes of the picture you told me you had destined for me; and am a little afraid that it has fallen into the hands of the French. if so, I am sure I shall not a little grudge it to them, and

could far rather hear of their having captured a province. What a selfish-hearted being will you pronounce me for such a sentiment!—but not so fast, my good patriot; for if, as is allowed, the value of most things in this world depends a good deal on opinion, pictures and provinces may, with some, have equal weight, especially when the former belongs to dear self, and the latter to the public at large. From the time that has elapsed since I last wrote, you might imagine, that I must have subject enough to furnish materials for a long letter; but in all that time I do not remember a single event that is in the least interesting to myself or my friends. The summer has passed with me in an agreeable manner: it is always a season of enjoyment, as the pleasures it affords are particularly calculated for my rural taste, and, in my present situation, these are almost the only ones I can partake of: but it was not a little enlivened by two agreeable excursions.

" In looking over some of your letters, which I preserve as carefully as a Catholic would the precious relic of some favourite saint, I find many of them are dated about this season *, and some at the very time in which I was employed in a like manner writing to you. How pleasing is the idea, that you may, perhaps at this moment, be penning an interesting account of your campaigns, your many dangers, and, I hope I may add, deliverances, for my perusal! The idea is delightful, and I will cherish it; for I am afraid to entertain the still more pleasing one, of a personal interview: and yet, castles built on that foundation are the most pleasant amusement of my leisure hours. But, indeed, in them, I may include the whole twenty-four: for here tranquillity holds an uninterrupted reign. From the time I get up in the morning, till my uncle makes his appearance at

* Christmas.

dinner-time, I have no more use for the faculty of speech than the Monks of La Trappe: then, indeed, I get a little conversation in the style of the country, of the badness of the weather, the deepness of the roads, the qualities of manure, or *politics*, which we discuss to admiration. Had my uncle been commander-in-chief of the sea or land forces, or I prime minister at home, Cornwallis would have been victorious, and Graves had sent the French home with disgrace. After settling these important matters, my reverend companion takes his nap, and I rattle at the harpsichord, till our reading-time begins, (which is usually from seven till eleven :) and then I hold forth on various subjects. History and travels are our chief favourites; but with them we intermix a variety of miscellaneous literature, with now and then a favourite novel, to relish our graver studies. This is a picture of the last three months, and may serve as one for many more to come;

and yet my spirits are unimpaired, and my vivacity almost what it was half-a-dozen years ago.

" My uncle joins in offering his love to my dear Charles; and bids me assure you of the happiness it would afford him to see you seated at his heartsome *Ingle*."

To the same.

1782.

" This is one of the most solitary winters I have ever passed, as I have now no companions to enliven any part of it: my friend Miss C———'s marriage has deprived me of both sisters. I have, indeed, many invitations to go there; but I should not like to leave my worthy uncle to pass these long winter evenings alone; and on that account I cheerfully give up the pleasure I might expect from a more enlarged society. Indeed, I very seldom think of going farther than the gravel-walk. Happily, nature has furnished me with a good flow of spirits,

and an imagination that can find amusement within itself. Were this not the case, I should be apt to feel the effects of continued dulness; and still, in some cross moments, I can't help thinking it a little hard, that with all the good will imaginable towards the pleasures of society, I should be condemned to pass the best days of my youth in such a solitude, that I might, to all intents and purposes, be as well shut up in a monastery; for, though I am not forbid the use of my tongue, unless I were to utter my complaints to the groves and purling streams, I must be silent; and I am not far enough gone either in love or romance, to talk to woods and wilds. But pardon me so much egotism, which I don't know how I was led into."

To the same.

1782.

" I never think of saying a word of public news, as you will no doubt receive

better information than I can give you. The people here are not such great politicians as in Ireland: there politics engross the greatest part of discourse in every company; and man, woman, and child enter as zealously into every debate, as if they had been perfectly acquainted with all the hidden springs of government. The people here pretend to no such knowledge; but whatever changes happen, either in the ministry or constitution, they seem to adopt the maxim of Mr. Pope, that, *whatever is, is right.*

" At one of the greatest meetings in Scotland, a member, who met with the loudest applause, and who, I dare say, spoke out the concealed sentiments of most of his contemporaries, said, he always looked upon our parliamentary members as a sort of fowlers, and as that man was esteemed the best sportsman that brought down the most birds, so was he the best representative that brought the best pensions and places

to his countrymen. But to what a length am I running on a subject I hardly ever spoke upon in my life! But when I sit down to write, I never for a moment consider what I ought to say; but ramble on with the first thought that occurs, on whatever strikes my fancy."

To the same.

1783.

"Although I never omit any opportunity of writing, a considerable time has elapsed since I last had that pleasure, which was with the fleet that sailed in spring. The most agreeable event that has since befallen me, was the arrival of your several favours of July and October. The inexpressible pleasure the sight of each dear packet conveyed to my heart, I could give no idea of to any one whose feelings were less warm or less interested than my own: but I know my dear Charles is not one of those cool sons of apathy; and I flatter myself, that

even one of my little epistles, trifling and uninteresting as they might be to any other person, may serve to awaken some of those sensations which must be *felt*, but to the *unfeeling* can never be *described*. Before I began to write, I sat down to the reperusal of your three last letters, but found that if I went on, I should totally disqualify myself for the task of answering them. Indeed, I do not know whether the generous proof you have given me of your affection, affords me most pain or pleasure: while I glory in having such a brother, I should be very unworthy of the attachment he shows me, if I were not grieved at the idea of his distressing himself on my account.

" In spite of all you say to the contrary, I cannot, I will not give up the darling idea of your return to Britain. Small as are the limits you give to your ambition, it will be hard indeed if they are not gratified. We all know that the reward of virtue is not in this life; it is in another and a

better state that it will never fail to meet with it. But even here, Providence often returns to the generous heart a portion of the blessings it has bestowed; and to that Power I look with hope, that my dear brother may yet reap the reward of his generous and liberal dispositions, in having it more amply in his power to indulge them.

" I must now, my dear Charles, thank you for the pains you have taken on the subject of the trip to India * ; a subject, on which I never once entertained a serious thought at the first view: the objections to it were so many and so insuperable, that nothing but my having been left in a most helpless situation could have induced me to admit of such an idea; and even in that case, unless some very happy change had taken place in your affairs, I never could have been tempted to throw such a burden

* This alludes to a proposal from Mr. Hamilton, that his sister should come to reside with him in India.

on your generosity. In the pleasure of enjoying your company, and living under your protection, I should indeed have had a temptation, such a temptation, as, had no other obstacles stood in the way than danger and fatigue, would soon have overcome them: but the thousand delicacies that form a barrier to every woman possessed of true female feelings, I never could have attempted to overleap; nor would even the certainty of *getting a husband* weigh so very deeply with me, as you gentlemen may perhaps imagine; nor am I sure I should be quite so *saleable* as you might partially suppose: I believe the pert adventuress would have the advantage of me: some antiquated notions of refinement might stand in my way, such as that there were some other requisites besides fortune essential to happiness,—a similarity of disposition, an union of heart and sentiment, and all those little delicacies, which one, whose only ambition is to possess wealth,

and whose most ardent wish is the parade of grandeur, may overlook, but which one of a different education, and another manner of thinking, could not dispense with. Seriously and deeply, however, do I think myself indebted for the tender solicitude you express for my happiness.

" All girls build castles: for my own share, I confess, I have raised structures of all dimensions.*

" A few years ago I beheld you placed in a lordly seat, with all the grandeur I have ever seen displayed by any of our eastern nabobs: I then descended so far as to give you four or five hundred a-year, with a house and equipage to correspond. But now that time has taught me the fallacy of all these fantastic hopes, my wish is to see you even in the humble sphere of Ingram's Crook, where, with a competence

* *Vide* the letter on castle-building, in which she acknowledges her obligations to this imaginative faculty.

sufficient to procure the necessaries and comforts of life, I sincerely believe you might possess more real happiness, than most of those who enjoy all its superfluities."

In the year 1785, Miss Hamilton sent her first voluntary contribution to the press, in a number of the Lounger, (republished in these volumes,) which was received and accepted by the editor without any knowledge of the author. Of the same date is a sportive poem, called " Anticipation," written with the facility and freedom of a practised pen. She supposes herself presented with a mirror, in which she is permitted to contemplate her friends as they should appear when changed and modified by the lapse of thirty years. After witnessing the many alterations which time had produced in her contemporaries, she turns to her own portrait.

" With expectation beating high,
Myself I now desire to spy,

And strait I in the glass surveyed
An antique maiden much decayed,
Whose languid eye, and pallid cheek,
The conquering power of time bespeak.
But though deprived of youthful bloom,
Free was my brow from peevish gloom.
A cap, though not of modern grace,
Hid my grey hairs and deck'd my face.
No more I fashion's livery wear,
But cleanly neatness all my care.
Whoe'er had seen me must have said,
There goes one cheerful, pleased, old maid.'

It does not appear that Miss Hamilton devoted much time to her pen : she was, in fact, much occupied by domestic engagements. Deducting from the morning the hours allotted to household superintendence, and from the evening those dedicated to her uncle's amusement, little leisure remained for solitary study, without encroaching on the season of repose : neither is it probable, that at this period, she aspired to literary fame ; a fairer vision floated on her fancy ; a happiness dearer than distinction appeared to invite her acceptance ; but the

vision passed away, happily, without casting an invidious shade over her future existence.*

* The following passage, extracted from her private Journal, is a beautiful illustration of her principle, that disappointments fertilise the mind, and prepare it for future felicity. " In the loss of my dear maternal friend, my mind experienced not only the shock of grief, and pain of sorrow, but was brought to exert its powers in thoughtful meditation; it was then I first learnt to check the quick sallies of passion, and to restrain the sanguine flight of delusive hope; it was then I first felt the uncertainty of earthly happiness, and first experienced the comforts of a religious education, which led me, when deprived of the guide and directress of my youth, to consider myself as being still under the protection of my Almighty Friend and Benefactor, whose blessing I implored, and for whose favour I sought more seriously than I ever should, in the giddy days of unclouded prosperity. By time, however, the strongest impressions will be in some degree effaced. Again, perhaps, might my mind have wandered in the flowery field of earthly bliss, had it not been called again to reflection by the sharp sting of disappointment; a disappointment, the effects of which, upon my mind, bore no proportion to the cause, and which, in the retrospect, must make me still conscious of my own weakness, and for ever diffident of my own judgment; and which ought likewise to render me indulgent to the weakness, and compassionate to the sorrows of others, even where they appear most imaginary."

To Charles Hamilton, Esq.

March, 1786.

" In a scene that seldom knows a variation, except what the change of season produces in the prospects around me, whereby much the largest portion of my time is spent in complete solitude, the pleasures of imagination are the chief source of delight, and never do they afford so sweet a banquet as when I indulge myself with the dear hope of embracing a brother, who has ever been so deservedly dear to me, and never does despondency on any other subject affect my spirits with so deep a gloom as when it comes across me in this; then, indeed, as in every possible event of life, I experience the comfort of yielding an implicit submission to the will of that Being, whose unerring wisdom sees what is best, and whose unbounded goodness will undoubtedly grant it. Since my return from Glasgow, where I spent three weeks in a

very gay, agreeable manner, I have been almost always at home, with no companion but my good old man, who is seldom within doors till dinner-time; after which he regales himself with his long-accustomed nap, and then, between reading, chatting, and backgammon, we conclude the evening, and usually retire, making the remark, that if we are not regaled by any high-seasoned amusements, we are disturbed by no uneasy cares; our peace is unmolested by anxiety, and our content unbroken by remorse. And who among the great and gay can say as much? Happily my uncle's spirits remain as unimpaired as his health: he still relishes the society of a few friends as much as ever. Our neighbourhood has, in the last ten years, made great changes in its inhabitants. A genteel circle of people (of middling fortune), who live rather in the social than the splendid way, have settled in the vicinity of Stirling. We are on a visiting footing with all of them, and,

though we do not have company often, we can still, now and then, entertain a little party, when we strive to unite a certain economical gentility with that spirit of hospitality which my uncle has long made the characteristic of his little mansion."

To the same.

"What are the trifling words joy and pleasure, to express what I this moment feel on the receipt of your dear letter. My mind is too much agitated to write with any degree of composure, though I still can hardly persuade myself of the possibility of so much happiness. The first intimation I had of your intention of revisiting Britain, was from ————————, at the beginning of summer; from that time, it is impossible to describe the eagerness and anxiety with which I watched the news of every fresh arrival, but ship after ship came in, and brought me only fresh disappointment.

"Hope, who has been my friend upon

all occasions, led me to expect that the Dublin, which was now the latest ship, might bring the long-wished-for happiness. Think, then, what I felt on reading in the newspaper of that ship being seen off the Cape in great distress; at length its arrival was announced, and, on Saturday last, among the list of the passengers, I saw your name; but still I was not, could not be convinced that it was really you. On Saturday I had a letter from ———— which almost convinced me, but at the same time damped my joy with the account of your having so bad a cold, as not to be able to leave the ship at Dover; but your letter of this morning has dissipated every fear, and left nothing but one tumult of joy and gratitude in my soul: — what thanks do I owe to the Great Disposer of Events, for your safety from the dangers of your voyage! My uncle is as well and as hearty as he ever was in his life; and, except that his step is not quite so firm as

it used to be, feels no more the inconveniences of age at seventy-seven than he did at five-and-twenty; he is now quite happy, flirting with his two great favourites, Miss L— and Miss R—, who are just now with me, and both are resolved to set their best hats at you; so remember, I say, beware of your heart.

"My uncle desires his love, with a thousand welcomes to Britain, which he longs to give you at his own fire-side. The two young ladies would perhaps debate the propriety of sending their compliments to a young gentleman; but I am sure you have their good wishes without a compliment."

The occasion of Mr. Hamilton's return to Europe was no less creditable to himself than satisfactory to his family. From the commencement of his military career, he had zealously applied to the study of the oriental languages, and, amidst the vicissitudes of a camp, whether exposed to danger or

solicited by pleasure, still created leisure for this important duty, devoting to books the moments stolen from recreation and repose. Associated with other eminent men in the Asiatic Society established at Calcutta, Mr. Hamilton would willingly have concurred with the most illustrious of his colleagues, Sir William Jones, in elucidating the antiquities of Hindostan, or translating the poets of Persia. But his inclinations were counteracted by various circumstances connected with a military destiny. The expedition against the Rohillas was a subject of general interest on which no one was so competent to afford information as Mr. Hamilton, who had been personally engaged in the service. Influenced by considerations of prudence and propriety, he began to compile the Rohilla history, and had already made some progress in the task, when a more important object arrested his attention.

Amongst many magnificent literary plans, originating in the enlightened liberality of Mr. Hastings, was a proposal for translating from the Persian the Hedaya, or Code of Mussulman Laws;—a most arduous undertaking, of which it was difficult to calculate the toil, and hazardous to predict the termination.

Mr. Anderson, a member of the Asiatic Society, and eminent for his comprehensive knowledge of oriental literature, was the person first selected for the task; but the state of his health rendering it necessary that he should return to Europe, the office was, by order of the Governor and Council, transferred to his intimate and much-esteemed friend Mr. Hamilton; who obtained permission to return for five years to England, where only he could command the leisure, the ease, and tranquillity, so essential to the performance of his engagement. In embracing this resolution, he

was neither allured by the prospect of emolument, nor solaced by anticipations of celebrity. "You must not expect," observed Sir William Jones in his farewell letter, "you must not expect that any work "on the Mahometan laws (though Gabriel "himself were to descend and write it) "would have a rapid sale in England." The reward to which Mr. Hamilton aspired was honourable distinction, which by a Briton is justly considered the passport to fortune and to fame. If he was sanguine in his calculations, they were not unauthorised by reason and experience. Scarcely thirteen years were elapsed since he had landed in Asia, with the feelings of a solitary stranger. He was now returning to his native country, no longer undistinguished and unknown. Without patronage or protection, he had, by unblemished conduct, and unconquerable exertion, not only acquired reputation, but achieved distinction. The place he held in soci-

ety was not merely honourable, but dignified; since he ranked amongst his literary colleagues and chosen friends the most celebrated scholars and accomplished men in Asia, and might hereafter hope to extend the fellowship to his illustrious compatriots in Europe. With such reflections he beguiled the tedious voyage; and finally hailed his native shore with emotions which (to use his own words) "it is not permitted "to any man to enjoy twice." In the ineffable satisfaction of that moment, he had probably neither leisure nor inclination to reflect on the irreparable waste of health and strength by which the privilege had been dearly purchased. Who indeed would not commute for the sufferings of disease, or even the languor of premature decay, to escape the tortures of disappointment — the annihilation of neglect? To ardent minds, success is worthy of every sacrifice but integrity and independence.

On the 20th of December, 1786, Mr. Hamilton arrived at Ingram's Crook, where, after reposing a few days in that home of peace and hospitality, he proceeded to Dublin to see his elder sister, from whom he received a no less tender welcome.

In his subsequent journey to London, he enjoyed the society of this lady; and no sooner was his business transacted, and the history of the Rohilla war published, than they both returned to Mr. Marshall's cottage, where, for the first time since their mother's death, this affectionate family was reunited beneath the same roof.

During several months, Mr. Hamilton was sedulously engaged in unravelling all the intricacies of the Persian tome; whilst Miss Hamilton occasionally associated in his morning labours; and always admitted to his social evenings, no longer remembered that Ingram's Crook was insulated—

no longer felt that she lived in seclusion from the world.

In this domestic circle the winter passed away, the spring rapidly succeeded, and the society of Mr. Hamilton gave to every day an undiminished zest. His conversation is generally allowed to have possessed equal attractions for a mixed or select audience; and whether grave or gay, enlivened by anecdote or enriched with reflection, animated by military details or embellished with picturesque description, it still supplied an inexhaustible fund of information and entertainment. By Miss Hamilton, who delighted to ascribe to her brother the developement and almost the creation of her mind, this auspicious season was always represented as the era of a new existence. Allowing for the exaggeration of enthusiasm, it was impossible that she should not have been essentially benefited by her daily intercourse with an enlightened man, who,

from natural and acquired endowments, was eminently calculated to enlarge her views, and to regulate her opinions, by correcting the mistakes incident to a self-taught recluse, and ingrafting liberality and candour on her native stock of good sense and mental independence.

Nature often lavishes on women talents unprofitable to society and to their possessor; compared with men, they are but gleaners in those fields of literature and science which yield such ample harvests; and the operations even of genius must be impeded or circumscribed by imperfect knowledge and partial experience; if the requisite materials be wanting, the artisan but wastes time and labour in preparing the flimsy fabric. It was not, however, that Miss Hamilton borrowed from her brother's mind, but that he taught her to explore her own latent and hitherto unappropriated treasures: it was for his pene-

tration to discover, in the beautiful flowers that embellished the surface, the qualities of the soil beneath. From sympathy, rather than emulation, she was led to assimilate herself to him in the character of her pursuits. His conversation inspired her with a taste for oriental literature; and without affecting to become a Persian scholar, she spontaneously caught the idioms, as she insensibly became familiar with the customs and manners of the East.

In 1788, Mr. Hamilton quitted his agreeable retreat; and on this occasion Mr. Marshall willingly allowed his niece to pay her first visit to London, under the protection of her beloved brother.

In the preface to his Rohilla history, Mr. Hamilton had boldly avowed abhorrence and contempt for those atrocious calumnies on the conduct of the British army in India, which, though levelled particu-

larly against one individual, in some degree impeached the credit and respectability of every soldier serving in India. Attached to the cause of Mr. Hastings, he was intimately connected with his best friends, many of whom, it is superfluous to observe, were men of brilliant talents or extraordinary attainments. In this polished circle, Miss Hamilton discovered all the charms of novelty and congeniality; and it was here, perhaps, that she first became conscious of her own strength. Learning may be insulated; imagination delights in solitude; but wit and humour are social qualities, and can only be excited in a genial element.

In the summer, Miss Hamilton returned to Ingram's Crook; but in the following autumn, Mr. Marshall, who had hitherto enjoyed uninterrupted health, was attacked by an epidemic complaint,

which in a few days conducted him to the grave. *

After this privation, Miss Hamilton had no motive for remaining at the Crook. She therefore speedily rejoined her brother and sister; with whom she spent nearly two years, chiefly in the metropolis, and occasionally in making rural excursions. Though still engaged in revising the Hedaya, Mr. Hamilton was sufficiently at leisure to cultivate in a select circle the pleasures of elegant society; and this animated scene was sometimes exchanged with advantage for the indulgence of rural recreation and literary retirement.

In whatever scene she appeared, Miss Hamilton obtained the consideration due

* A monument was erected to him by Miss Hamilton, who ever retained the most grateful attachment to his memory.

to sound sense and discriminating judgment. Without effort, she enlivened the domestic circle, or lent to the most brilliant parties the rare charms of animation and gaiety, of frankness, simplicity, and modesty.

At this delightful period of her life, it was her happiness to form a friendship with a literary family, who, next to her brother, fostered her rising talents, and contributed to her future fame. In the Rev. Dr. Gregory, (whose life was an honour to his profession,) her grateful heart delighted to acknowledge the judicious adviser to those literary pursuits, which made her so extensively useful. In his wife, she found a woman congenial to her taste, and who, in mind and manners, realised all she had previously conceived of female excellence. The progress of their intimacy was rapid; but it traversed no hollow ground. The favourite companion became imperceptibly

the cherished, chosen friend; and the various vicissitudes of nearly thirty years, only confirmed the strength and augmented the tenderness of this mutual attachment.

With the consummation of Mr. Hamilton's labours ended the happiness of the little party that had so long subsisted in cordiality and concord. The printing of the Hedaya * being completed, the indefatigable translator reluctantly commenced prepara-

* The East India Directors undertook to defray the expense of printing the Hedaya, and to receive a certain number of copies, the remainder to be the property of the translator, who sent a part to his agents in Calcutta, and retained the rest for sale in London. At the suggestion of some intimate friends of Mr. Hamilton, a memorial was presented to the Directors; and in promoting its success, Mr. Hastings united with them in the warmest manner; in consequence of which the Directors purchased the copy-right and the unsold copies of the work.

It was not for pecuniary emolument that Mr. Hamilton had engaged in this undertaking: his object was to obtain the appointment of Resident at the Court of the Vizier, or some similar situation, which might facilitate the acquisition of honourable independence.

tions for leaving England. In the prosecution of his laborious task, he had received many precious testimonies of esteem and approbation, from the most accomplished orientalists, and by its successful completion, had secured his future establishment in India; but the satisfaction with which he contemplated his fair prospect was alloyed by the necessity of being again divided from all his dearest connections. To his sisters the trial was still more severe; yet each endeavoured to disguise her apprehensions, and to silence unavailing regrets. — Mrs. Blake went for some time to the north of England; whilst Miss Hamilton resumed possession of Ingram's Crook. Here she was gratified by a parting visit from her affectionate brother, who took this opportunity to re-urge what he had often recommended to her attention, that she should engage in some literary undertaking, which, by affording constant occupation to her thoughts,

might beguile the painful solicitudes inevitably attending their separation.

On the 15th of September he took an eternal farewell of this little mansion of hospitality, impressed with sentiments of tender melancholy, which, to judge from the following passage extracted from his correspondence, not all his brilliant prospects could wholly dissipate.

" September 16th, 1791.

" ' Joy be to Shiraz, and its charming ' bowers! O Heaven preserve thee from ' decay!'—Thus sang the immortal Hafiz on first quitting the place of his nativity; and thus sang I, as I quitted the mansion of soft tranquillity and domestic peace, to engage once more in the turmoils of a world for which I begin to fear I am but indifferently qualified. Alas! what are those wild delusive passions, which so eternally lead mankind out of the road of

rational felicity, and, urging them to grasp at the shadows of avarice, vanity, or ambition, cause them to forget or overlook the humbler but more substantial blessings, which they may command. — But soft — is not happiness equally the portion of every state of life? and may not that very tranquillity which, on a transient view, we so much admire and sigh after, carry in its train the dæmons of soul-rusting torpor and stagnant apathy? Bow then, my soul, with humble resignation to the decree of Providence, in whatever sphere it is thy lot to move. — Such, my dearest Bess, was the train of reflections, which occupied me on the day of my departure *from your sweet mansion!*"

Owing to unexpected circumstances, Mr. Hamilton's embarkation was deferred till the spring; and to her other regrets, Miss Hamilton now added the reflection, that she had prematurely deprived herself

of his society. The approach of Christmas increased her dejection: in surveying her desolated home, she was painfully reminded of the cherished objects she had lost; and, instead of looking to the future for hope and encouragement, was led by an involuntary impulse, to contrast her present with her former sitution.* This melancholy seemed prophetic of the cala-

* The following unpremeditated lines, written on the 31st December, 1791, exhibit the state of her feelings:—

"Year of vicissitude, when thou wast born,
Thou saw'st my heart in sweet contentment blest;
Responsive greetings hail'd thy primal morn,
And kindred friends the hand of friendship press'd."

Speaking of the social pleasures with which she was then encircled, she adds,

"In one alone I saw, Oh, pleasing sight!
The mind's first gifts—the heart's best virtues blend—
In a lov'd brother saw them all unite,
And mine the pride to call that brother friend!

"Such were thy early scenes, deceitful year!
From these thy closing hour beheld me torn;
Condemn'd to leave whate'er my soul holds dear,
Reluctant, sorrowing, hopeless, and forlorn."

mity that awaited her. Mr. Hamilton had long ceased to be robust: in his last journey from Scotland he contracted a cold, which produced alarming pulmonary symptoms. A voyage to Lisbon being recommended by his medical friends, he invited his elder sister to be the companion of his voyage, whilst, with mistaken tenderness, he endeavoured to disguise from the other the extent of his malady; but the following letter, though written with a different view, awakened her suspicion of the fatal truth.

" Hampstead, Dec. 16th, 1791.

" Thank you, my dear Bess, for your favour of the 6th; to which I should have given an earlier reply, but knew you would readily make some allowance, on account of the intervention of the important business of the 14th. I have found it impossible to avoid stirring a little about town, and using some personal exertions, which have

proved rather unfavourable to my health, but which, I hope, will repay me in their consequences. The 14th was, indeed, one of the proudest days of my life; and that owing to the unsolicited and unexpected exertions of friendship. As the question to be determined on by the general court regarded myself, I could not in delicacy be present. The attendance was, however, uncommonly full; I understand some hundreds. On the matter being proposed to the court, it was seconded by ——— who, in a very eloquent and impressive speech of above forty minutes, urged my services to the Company and to my country, and insisted on the necessity, for *their own* sakes, of my meeting with a suitable, distinguishing, and honourable reward. In the conclusion of his speech, he took occasion to make an affecting apostrophe to the audience on the present state of my health, and exhibited, in lively colours, a constitution exhausted, and the most pre-

cious years of life expended, in the prosecution and completion of a great public work, which had heretofore yielded me nothing but that *fame* and *applause* it was not in their power to withhold. — ' Finally, Mr. H —— is not like the ordinary expectants of your favour. With the manly pride and unobtrusive dignity of real merit, he has refrained from those solicitations to which a common spirit might have stooped. But though he be above querulous complaint, let not *us* forget what is due to him, and to justice; let us show our readiness to distinguish worth, by the exertion of our power in rewarding it.' — This I transcribe from a faithful reporter. The speech was attended with its full effect.

" The honourable and general testimonies of respect and regard which this occasion has afforded me, is enough to renovate the springs of life, and to stop the progress of decay. Trifling and insignificant as my existence is, this is sufficient to re-

concile me to its continuance; at least I may reasonably rejoice that *I have lived so long.*"

To this letter Miss Hamilton replied in person. Touched, even to agony, with the allusion to her brother's exhausted constitution, she conceived an alarm that was not to be repressed, and instantly commenced her journey. On reaching Mr. Hamilton's lodgings, at Hampstead, she found her sister already arrived; but the object of their mutual solicitude was no longer in a state to leave England. During some weeks of this mournful reunion, the patient continued to linger, and his friends to fluctuate between doubt and despair. On the 14th March (1792) the conflict ended, when, in the prime of his ambitious hopes—with the prospect of realizing all his early dreams of distinction, Charles Hamilton expired, preserving, to his last moment, all the sensibilities that endear the man or exalt the Christian. His remains were privately interred in Bunhill-Fields. At Bel-

fast a monument was afterwards erected by his sisters, with a suitable inscription. *

* Sacred
To the memory of
Charles Hamilton, Esquire,
Late in the service of
The Honourable East India Company,
Translator of the Hedaya.

Amidst the dangers and fatigue of
a military life,
by the native energy of his mind,
he was enabled to unite
intense study with unabated activity.
In contemplating that lasting monument
of his oriental learning, admiration
will ever be accompanied by regret;
since incessant application
occasioned the loss of a life
dear to his Friends,
to his loving and beloved Sisters
invaluable.
His Philanthropy as a Man,
Intrepidity as a Soldier,
Taste as a Scholar,
Fidelity as a Friend, and
Affection as a Brother, were allowed by all
who knew him to have been
rarely equalled.
And those qualities were rendered
still more extensively and permanently useful
by a fervent spirit of Christian piety.
He died March 14th, 1792, aged 39.

A better, because a more popular memorial of his merits, is presented by Miss Hamilton, in a work which, though written eight years after his death, still retains all the freshness of recent grief.*

" One gentleman it has been my happiness to know, who entered upon life at the age of sixteen, without guide but his own principle, without monitor but the precepts of education, and the dictates of his own heart. Unsullied by the temptations of a capital, he was plunged into the temptations of a camp: fond of society, where his cheerful temper and easy manners formed him to shine, but still fonder of improvement, neither the inducements of a camp or city interrupted his unwearied pursuits of literature and science. Surrounded by companions who had caught the contagion of scepticism, he, at this early period of his life, listened to their arguments, weighed, examined, detected their futility, and rejected

* *Vide* Letters on Education, 1st vol.

them. In prosperity and adversity, in public and in private life, the sentiments of religion retained their influence on his heart: through life they were his friends, in death his consolation.—I find this subject is still too much for me."

The loss of such a brother, of such a friend, was felt by both sisters to be irreparable; and, mutually attached as they had ever been, there was something in the common sentiment of suffering and sorrow which endeared them still more to each other. Anxious to escape from a scene that could no longer be contemplated without the most bitter retrospections, Mrs. Blake and Miss Hamilton retired to Hadleigh in Suffolk, where a family of their acquaintance had been settled, and where they found the quiet and seclusion so eagerly coveted by those who have deeply tasted of affliction. The death of the principal of this family occasioned their re-

moval to Sunning, in Berkshire, a sweet and salubrious spot in the centre of a genteel and companionable neighbourhood. To the dejected sisters, society had lost its charms, and, but from a sense of duty, they would have shunned the civilities so often pressed on their acceptance;—yet retirement was equally divested of its former attractions.

Miss Hamilton often reverted to her brother's admonitions, that she should devote her talents to some literary pursuit; but she no longer descried the pole-star to direct her course; the outline she had traced under his improving eye remained a blank;—still she was unable to force her thoughts from the only subject that appeared worthy to engage them, and was thus insensibly led to conceive the design of writing the Hindoo Rajah, in which she was not only permitted to recall the ideas she had acquired from her brother's conversation, but to pourtray his character,

and commemorate his talents and virtues. When she had written a few sheets, she submitted to her *chosen friend** the plan of the work, but with a diffidence that betrays the dejection of her spirits. "I am afraid (she observes) to enquire what you will say to my black baby: I had no sooner given it out of my hands, than I passed sentence of condemnation on it myself, and was almost ashamed at having exposed it even to your eye; but there is one thing of which I must beg leave to assure you, and that is, I have so little of authorship about me, that there is no occasion for the smallest degree of delicacy in pointing out its defects, or, indeed, in condemning *in toto*, any child of my brain, towards whom I am so unnatural a parent, that I have hitherto seen them smothered without remorse. That which has been done by my own diffidence, will be still more easily accomplished, when

* Mrs. G——. Miss Hamilton traced to Mr. Hector M'Neill her first acquaintance with Dr. G.'s family.

aided by the judgment of a friend; on you, then, my dear madam, it will depend, whether my poor Rajah shall sleep in peace on his native mountains, or expose himself to the dangers of criticism, by a trip to England; if you think him too weak to stand the dangers of the voyage, he shall never move a step further."

The fiat of this intelligent friend decided the Rajah's destiny; but it was not till 1796 that it was permitted to struggle into existence. The Hindoo Rajah bears many traces of the melancholy that pervaded the author's mind: at the commencement, the style is appropriately figurative and poetical; the irony is solemn and imposing; the wit is often elegant; the satire grave and severe; the writer sometimes affects to smile, yet has obviously forgotten to laugh; her individual feelings are embodied in Charlotte; and a beautiful tribute is offered to her lamented brother, in the delineation of the

character of Percy, who is not introduced to the scene as a living actor, but as one already reposing in the grave: to have brought him forward in person, invested with life and energy, to have detailed in conversation his opinions and sentiments, would have been too painful an effort to her, whose tears were still flowing over his ashes. There is, in deep-felt reality, a counter-power to the sorcery of the imagination; and, in our waking, as in our sleeping dreams, it is long before the beloved image of one we have lost, is permitted to mingle familiarly with the visionary forms that float upon the mind: the master-chord of feeling is no sooner touched, than an impression is produced which dissolves the momentary illusion.

When the *Hindoo Rajah* was finished, it was not without reluctance that the author consented to prefix to it her name. She was sensible that the woman, who has once been brought before the public, can

never be restored to the security of a private station; and she naturally revolted from a measure which might seem to imply a dereliction of that delicacy which was her peculiar characteristic; but her objections were overruled, and the result justified the experiment. Previous to the publication of the *Hindoo Rajah*, Miss Hamilton had returned to London, where with steady though reluctant efforts, she forced herself into company, and gradually resumed her relish for cultivated society. But at this moment of reviving cheerfulness, she had to experience a severe domestic privation in the absence of her sister, whom business summoned to Ireland, and who had powerful motives for wishing to fix her residence in that country. In consequence of this involuntary separation, Miss Hamilton was left to the discomfort of a solitary lodging; a situation wholly new to her experience, and which she would have found insupportably irksome, but for her vicinity to Dr. Gre-

gory's residence, and the interest inspired by literary pursuits. It was now that she received from her new friends those unremitted proofs of sympathy and affection which are seldom extended beyond the pale of relationship. After a morning devoted to study, or perhaps consumed in struggles to resist the benumbing influence of melancholy retrospections, she constantly looked forward to one social evening hour, when seated at her own fire-side, she should be cheered by the presence, and alternately soothed or animated with the conversation of her accomplished friends. *

* A subsequent letter contains the following touching allusion to the daily consolation thus kindly administered: — "How unjust you are to yourself in the "circumscribed limits you assign to your powers of re- "novating soul and body. Can I ever forget how "sweetly and effectually I have often experienced "their salutary influence. I do sincerely assure you "the evening hour that I used to expect your visit in "Robert-street seldom has returned since that time "without bringing with it the affectionate remembrance "of the pleasure it then conveyed to my almost sinking

In one of those intimate conversations an idea was suggested to Miss Hamilton, which on the following morning she expanded to the first chapter of *The Modern Philosophers*. This careless essay of her pen was instantly submitted to the perusal of Dr. Gregory; and encouraged by his approbation, she ventured to proceed, almost wondering at her own temerity. It was thus that, during her melancholy habitation in Robert-street, amidst the interruptions incident to ill health and dejected spirits, she pourtrayed those humorous scenes which have often dissi-

---

" heart. I have been used, almost from infancy, to " contemplate with grateful rapture the wonderful " goodness of Providence, in the provision that is made " by nature for the sustenance and support of the va- " rious orders of created beings; but when I pursue the " subject from the material creation to the unseen, " though no less real blessings that are contrived by In- " finite Wisdom to succour and support the mind, my " feelings rise with the subject in a degree that far ex- " ceeds my power of expression. Friendship is indeed " the banquet of the soul; and for it I thank God I " have a constant appetite; nor have I ever been allow- " ed to hunger and thirst in vain."

pated in other minds the listlessness of *ennui*, or beguiled the weariness of care and disappointment.

At this period her acquaintance was not extensive; and the delicacy of her constitution not permitting her to pay many visits, she adopted the expedient of receiving company every Monday evening, and in this manner, without the trouble of issuing formal invitations, often collected an agreeable circle.

Mrs. Blake's absence being unavoidably prolonged, Miss Hamilton began to revolve plans for following her to Ireland, the Land of her nativity; — but to which she was less strongly attached than to Scotland, her adopted country. In a letter to a much-admired female correspondent*, she ob-

* This correspondence, and the attachment that produced it, originated in her intimacy with Dr. Gregory's family; and the collateral friendship proved worthy of its parent stock. It may be observed that Miss Ha-

serves, " My sister's attachment to Ireland
" continues or rather increases with the con-
" tinuance of her residence. This, you will
" say, is some encouragement to me, but it
" operates in a different direction : however
" similar our tastes and sentiments on other
" subjects, certainly there are in this case cir-
" cumstances which cannot possibly affect
" us in the same manner. If I go there,
" I make as complete a sacrifice of my taste
" and my inclinations, of my attachments
" and my pursuits, as ever poor nun did when
" she took the veil. If I do not, I give up an
" only deservedly-beloved sister, all that
" is now left to me of my family ; of which
" we two are the only remaining branches,
" destined to float but for a short time upon
" the surface of this troubled ocean, and
" then to be swallowed up in the inexorable

---

milton addresses this lady in a tone of deference never assumed with her other friends, implying not merely the homage offered to brilliant talents, but the reverence inspired by real philanthropy and unaffected piety.

" waves. Many and various are the lights " in which this subject appears to me ; and " few or none are the friends to whom I can " communicate my sentiments. Advice," " she continues, " is so generally asked " with no other view but that of procuring " an apology for following our own inclin- " ations, that the only business of the person " consulted is, to discover what these in- " clinations are : different between you and " me, I trust, will be the discharge of this " most sacred office of friendship." *

In another letter, addressed to the same correspondent, she communicates her final decision on this important subject. " ' A " word fitly spoken is like apples of gold

* In the same letters she expresses her earnest desire to extend the sphere of usefulness and benevolence. " Oh! that I could emulate the example you " there set before my eyes; with you to visit the habit- " ations of the wretched, and to learn from you how to " become truly useful, by administering to their wants, " would indeed be a glorious privilege."

" in pictures of silver,' saith the wise mo-
" narch of Israel; and such, so truly inva-
" luable, was the last letter of my dear
" friend. It arrived at a moment of per-
" plexity, of irresolution, of the most pain-
" ful distraction of mind, if I may so call
" it, and seemed sent by some good angel
" to sooth, to direct, and to comfort me.
" It gave me resolution to decide, and has
" supported me through the decision I have
" made. The point of view in which you
" have placed my removal to Ireland,
" makes my mind feel more satisfied in re-
" maining here than my own arguments
" upon the subject could have effected. Still
" I look for a re-union with my sister as a
" happiness in store for me, at no very dis-
" tant period; and am not without hopes
" that the present distracted state of our
" unhappy country may reconcile her mind
" to quitting it."

Having made this decision, Miss Hamil-
ton, who found it necessary to leave Lon-

don during the summer, joined a family in Gloucestershire, with whom she lived in a seclusion at that time congenial to her taste, and highly favourable to the progress of her embryo work.

Her rural residence is thus described by her own pen. "Mrs. Ratcliffe would "here find enough of scenery to fill a "couple of volumes, even without the "*moon*. I have never seen any place "that united more beauties. Inclosed in a "woody dingle, it appears from the hills "above to be secluded from the world; "but it nevertheless commands a view "of the rich vale of Evesham below, of "the Malvern hills and distant Welsh "mountains, and of the Severn till it is "united with the ocean. All this we enjoy "in peace, for we have no carriage road "within a mile of the house, and I have "hitherto seen but one visitor." *

* From another passage in the same letter, it appears that Miss Hamilton and her friends sometimes

Hitherto Miss Hamilton had regularly continued to advance with *The Modern Philosophers*, and in a few months reached the middle of the third volume, when its progress was suddenly arrested by illness, and she was compelled to return to London

---

emerged from this retirement to take a transient glimpse of the not distant world. "The week after my "arrival I accompanied this family to the grand annual "music meeting at Gloucester: it was numerously at- "tended. We had Mara, Braham, and all the principal "performers from London; and I do not think that even "at the Abbey the music was superior: the fine tones of "Mara filling the immense choir, and running through "the aisles of the great Cathedral, had an effect that "to any lover of music was transportingly sublime; an "effect that partakes not of the transient nature of "most sensations, since it can be recollected with plea- "sure; and yet, how poor is the recollection of such "pleasure compared to the remembered conversation "of those friends from whom our minds have received "new ideas, whose sentiments have invigorated our "virtue, and whose kind attentions have soothed our "sorrows. All the music since the days of Tubal Cain, "to the present hour, could not afford to my mind half "the pleasure enjoyed from the recollection of half an "hour's conversation with my dear Miss W—l—y."

to obtain medical advice. During some months her malady baffled the skill of her physicians, and finally developed itself in an attack of gout, to which she ever after continued to be subject. Happily this afflictive state was alleviated by the soothing attentions of her sister, who had hastened to London on receiving the intelligence of her illness, and from this moment renounced every other connection to contribute to the comfort of her existence.

By the advice of their mutual friends they removed to Bath, whose salutary springs soon restored to Miss Hamilton the use of her limbs, and the enjoyment of her wonted spirits. With such inducements to prolong their stay, they decided to settle in this agreeable city, which affords peculiar accommodation to females and invalids, and eventually discovered to Miss Hamilton the superior attractions of an elegant circle of acquaintance, in some of whom

she had the happiness to find inestimable friends, whose affection has even survived the grave. In an interval of comparative health *The Modern Philosophers* again employed her pen; and to her chosen friend (Mrs. G.) she thus announced its termination:

"I have at length got to the end of "Bridgetina; but before I got there, had "almost forgotten the beginning. I am "now employed in examining it critically, "and must candidly confess, that it does "not now please me half so well as when "it was first written; yet, without re-writ-"ing, I see not how I can alter it: be so "good as to favour me with your advice "upon this subject."

To give effect to the humour of *The Modern Philosophers*, it was obviously of importance that it should be published anonymously: but the author observes, with

that ingenuousness which was native to her mind, "I would not on any account publish "anonymously any thing which I should "either be ashamed or afraid to own."

The same enlightened judgment which had protected *The Rajah*, gave its sanction to *The Modern Philosophers*, notwithstanding the objections of the too scrupulous author. The work appeared early in 1800, and passed through two editions before the end of the year. After this encouragement, female diffidence no longer suggested the necessity of concealment, and the author openly asserted her title to a work, the credit of which had been gratuitously conferred on two or three celebrated writers.

The popularity of *The Modern Philosophers* was a passport to fame and distinction; and Miss Hamilton almost instantly found herself admired by the celebrated

and the fashionable, and an object of curiosity and interest to the public. On the plan and execution of this work it would now be superfluous to offer any remarks: its favourite phrases have acquired popular authority; the name of the heroine is proverbial. Such success was the more remarkable, as the subject was not new, and the ground had been pre-occupied by writers of inferior skill. But in them, the spirit of party had usurped the place of wit and humour: in *The Modern Philosophers*, on the contrary, the alliance of morals and politics was carefully disclaimed, and consequently Aristocrats and Democrats agreed to laugh. Of the positive good resulting from her work, the author received a most pleasing testimony in a letter from a young woman, evidently of superior talents, who confessed she had detected herself in Bridgetina, and instantly abjured the follies and absurdities which created the resemblance.

This was not the only instance in which the author had the satisfaction to discover from strangers, that she had proved to them a real friend; —a satisfaction which she would not have exchanged for the most flattering plaudits of fashion.

In 1800, Miss H. laid the foundation of a new work, on a subject that had long engaged her attention, and that promised to be permanently and extensively useful. In the "Letters on Education," it was her aim, not to state and explain new truths, but to suggest for those already known a prompt and practical application. Her plan is independent of rank or fashion; she prescribes not rules, but enforces principles, immutable in their nature, in their operation universal.

In composing this work, she accustomed herself to read a few letters to some sensible female, who had an interest in the

subject;—a practice repugnant to the self-importance of literary egotism, but from which she learnt to measure the capacities of those it was her object to enlighten, and her ambition to instruct. Few distinguished individuals have been equally free from that fastidiousness, which sometimes entails on cultivation and refinement so many evils as to render their possession an object of ambiguous good. "Letter "writing," says Miss Hamilton (in one "of her epistolary effusions) "is often a "grievous task to me; but when my spirits "have been exhausted by writing to others, "I have ever found relief in scribbling to "my own dear friend; just as when tired "by formal visits I have renovated my "whole soul by a little social chat. Often, "after the drudgery before mentioned, I "have been tempted to exclaim with the "royal moralist, 'Surely man walketh "in vain shew, and disquieteth himself "in vain.' What can be more vain, than

" keeping up a set of tiresome acquaint-
" ance, whose conversation is stale, flat,
" and unprofitable; and yet I do not know
" whether a person who desired to live to
" himself alone, and never to associate
" with those who were not qualified in an
" eminent degree to amuse or instruct,
" would not upon the whole be the loser.
" I am convinced it is not favourable to
" philanthropy to be fastidious, and there-
" fore wish to check the disposition when-
" ever I find it growing on me." In another letter, addressed to the same friend during a temporary residence near Devizes, she discovers that youthful susceptibility of temper, which, when united to healthy moral feelings, doubles the capacity for receiving and communicating enjoyment.

" We have been enjoying ourselves in several pleasant excursions, all of which have proved highly agreeable. In the be-

ginning of last week we went to Stonehenge, which I have had a longing desire to see, ever since I was ten years old. We were gratified even beyond expectation, which is saying a great deal. From Stonehenge we went to Amesbury, the seat of the Duke of Queensberry, and occupied by nuns: they are sisters of the order of Augustin, all English, and had a richly endowed convent in the Low Countries; from thence they were driven at the Revolution, to seek an asylum, which was not denied them, in their native country. We were there at the hour of vespers, and permitted by the lay-sister who attended, to glide softly into the chapel, where the nuns were still on their knees, though the service was over. They appeared so deeply engaged by their private devotion, that we could contemplate without disturbing them; and I confess that, much as I have heard of nunneries, there was something in the solemnity of the scene that greatly affected

me. I could not observe a trait of discontent on any countenance; a self-subdued spirit seemed marked on all: there was a look of complacency and resignation that highly pleased me. When prayers were over, one of them politely accompanied us to the parlour, which is simply a division, but no grate, which they thought would have appeared like affectation in this country.

"We had yesterday another jaunt, equally gratifying, to Lord Pembroke's seat at Wilton, celebrated for statues and antiques, the account of which fills a quarto volume: so it must suffice to say, that we were almost equally gratified and fatigued. But the dear Cathedral at Salisbury could be looked at for ever with fresh delight; no specimen of architecture ever gave me so much.

"I have filled my letter with an account of inanimate things, while there were some of a more exalted nature that I intended to present to your acquaintance.

" We shall leave Wilts with a high idea of the worth and hospitality of its inhabitants."

It was characteristic of Miss Hamilton, that whatever place or family she visited, she always acquired in it a new friend: yet it must not be supposed, that she was versatile or fickle in her attachments; she gave her suffrage to merit, her sympathy was yielded to misfortune; and whilst she admitted to her confidence the worthy, or selected for intimacy the cultivated, she delighted to foster unprotected talent, to animate the lambent flame of hope, and to refresh the neglected germs that were withering in dreary desolation. It has been remarked, that women are seldom disposed to encourage the developement of literary talent in their own sex, though they are not slow to offer homage to those who have already acquired a title to celebrity; and that whilst every indigent man of genius

finds a patroness, there is scarcely a solitary instance of a female, placed in similar circumstances, who has been drawn from obscurity by the same propitious influence.

It would be easy to expatiate on the illiberality of general reflections: it is better to impugn their authority by individual example. Perfectly free from vanity, and from all the caprices connected with the gratification of selfish feeling, Miss Hamilton never appeared to exult more in her own success, than when it invested her with the privilege of lending support to some unprotected female, about to enter on the same adventurous course. Merit, wherever discovered, immediately attracted her attention: and often did she animate the diffident, or direct the inexperienced. It would not be difficult to illustrate, by various instances, this part of her character; but it will be sufficient to observe, that the following charming letter on castle-building was ad-

dressed, after a very short acquaintance, to one, whom her kindness distinguished in adversity, whom her encouragement roused to exertion, and her friendship preserved from despondence: neither disparity of years, nor inequality of situation, formed any barrier to the progress of intimacy and confidence. The woman of acknowledged talents and celebrity, appears not only to have disclaimed, but even to have forgotten the distance between herself and her undistinguished correspondent.

"I perfectly agree with you in considering castles as more useful edifices than they are usually allowed to be. It is only plodding matter-of-fact dulness that cannot comprehend their use. I do not scruple to confess to you, as I find you are a sister adept in this art of free-masonry, that I owe to it three-fourths of my sense, and half my virtue. It is by giving free scope

to the imagination, that one becomes thoroughly acquainted with the real dispositions of one's own heart: it is by comparing the ardent efforts of exalted virtue, formed by the fancy, with what conscience tells us we have performed, that we are instigated to improvement; and by tracing the combinations of which our castles have been composed, we acquire a knowledge of our own minds, as at once enlightens the understanding and betters the heart. I sincerely believe that the great disadvantage of perpetually living in a crowd, is the check it puts upon the free excursions of imagination.

" Was ever Bath belle as much improved by walking on the crowded Crescent as you and I have been by a solitary ramble, when, at the magic touch of fancy, a new creation has arisen around us? By most of the pious people and pious writers I have met with, the imagination is treated as a sort of evil spirit, that must be exorcised and laid at

rest; but in my opinion, it is very impious, and surely very ungrateful, thus to treat the first of blessings, without which judgment will be but a sour old maid, producing nothing. Let us marry them, and we shall do better; for it is evident neither of them was meant for the single state."

This correspondence, which had begun on the part of Miss Hamilton from motives of kindness and generosity, was continued from sentiments of affection and friendship. What contributed to cement the attachment, was the privilege which her young friend enjoyed of almost daily intercourse with the beloved family in London, to whom she was tenderly and inviolably attached, and to hear of whose welfare, as appears from the following extracts, was a constant source of delight to her affectionate heart.

A few extracts from these letters will evince, that none of her affections were ex-

tinguished, and that she contined to possess all those lively feelings which are so naturally unfolded in her early correspondence.

" Bath.

" For what a charming letter have I to thank my dear ———! Let misanthropes cull their rotten weeds from the dirty ditch of life, and say, ' such are the productions of nature;' but let it be our's to gather the fair flowers she has profusely strewed in our path. A few plants of the Gregorian *genus* would make a garden of the world. You did not consider my poor eyes, when you gave me the account of your conversation with my amiable friend; or did not know that nothing is so bad for them as *tears*. The delicious ones that your letter caused plentifully to flow, were, however, not of the baneful kind.

" I cannot conceive any feeling to be so exquisitely delicious, as that which is derived from a sense of the tender solicitude taken in one's interest by those we

esteem and love. This generous concern touches the very key-string of my heart; and I am sure you will believe me, when I declare, that I am infinitely more anxious for the success of my bantling than *ever. The mother's favourite is not always the most promising of the family; but if partiality does not blind me, I think this will not do any discredit to its friends. When the first proof came home, I did not like its look in print; so stopped the press, and wrote another first chapter. Indeed, I believe it ought to be a rule with every author, on every subject to re-write the beginning of a work after the whole has come to a conclusion; for there is much truth in the observation, that 'we understand a subject, *because* we have written upon it.' "

" Bath, Jan. 3. 1802.

" Certainly my dear ——— imagines, that there is no such thing as envy in the

* The Letters on Education.

composition of her friend, else she would never have risked the description of an evening in C——el-street. I fear my sister will soon have as great an objection to my receiving your letters from London, as a poor friend of our's used to have to those his wife received from a near relation in Dublin, which contained such fine descriptions of the gaiety of the capital, and of the finery with which she was decorated to go to the *charming card parties* that came in ever-constant succession, that the poor sister in the country was mortified to that degree, as to sicken into sadness after the receipt of every epistle. She, dear lady, had a small fortune, and a family of seven children: feathers indeed she had, when her children wanted frocks; but, alas! there was no place in which she could display her finery. Judge then how mortifying it was to receive such lively descriptions of a sister's happiness, who night after night had the superlative felicity of showing her

fine clothes to an admiring world! You may make a mock of her distress, but I have learned to pity the poor woman from my soul; for just so did I feel after the perusal of your letter by Mr. S——; the description of an evening in ——— street conjuring up exactly the same spirit of vain regret in my bosom, as the description of a lady mayoress's rout used to do in the breast of our poor friend. You, indeed, were somewhat more considerate than this poor lady's tantalizing correspondent, as you sent me no paltry part of your entertainment."

" April 27th.

" Surely the law of kindness is written on the heart of my ——— in characters deep and indelible. How much have I been obliged and gratified by your dear entertaining letters! In reading them, I lose all idea of the medium through which they are conveyed: I am transported, as if

by magic, wherever you would have me, and see with my own eyes, and hear with my own ears every thing, and every body you describe. I could at this moment sketch a caricature of you and Miss ——— at the cage of the cockatoo, and have laughed over your disaster till my sides ache. Your description of Lady ———'s parties gives an insight into her character more perfect than volumes. It perfectly agrees with the whole tenour of my observations upon human character; all of which convince me, that, however quick the perceptions, however cultivated the understanding, and however refined the taste, there will never be much expansion in the minds of those who have been confined by situation to one particular sphere. People in high life have this peculiar disadvantage attending their's, that all who mix with them aim at conforming to their manners and prejudices; so that their vanity is fed from all quarters. Is it then extraordinary,

that strength of mind and vigour of intellect, should be so seldom met with in elevated situations? Were people in the middling ranks of society but fully sensible of the advantages they enjoy, from the opportunities of enlarging their sphere of observation on all sides, so many would surely not be found willing to relinquish this privilege, for the silly gratification of being considered *of a certain class.* This folly, of which I see so many instances, provokes while it diverts me. As real knowledge and sound reasoning gain ground, this folly will disappear. But, alas! I fear the period is still at a distance."

To the same.

" June 8th.

" It is quite refreshing to my heart to sit down to chat to a friend, who has as little taste for the minutiæ of what is called business as myself, and doubly so to get rid for a time of that hateful view of mankind,

which dealing with knaves and cheats, unfortunately presents. O for a draught of Lethe, to forget that there are such things as deceit, avarice, falsehood, and injustice in the world! Who so capable of furnishing me with such a draught as dear ———? Before my pen has run through a single page to her, I begin to feel its effects. I have already sipped a sufficient quantity for present use, and inspired by you, turn to the bright side of mankind, which I really believe will turn out to be —woman! I used to combat this with dear Miss W—l—y stoutly; but experience has taken her side of the question, and the more I see and know of the world, I am the more convinced, that whenever our sex step over the pale of folly, (which, unhappily, is a *feat* that by far the greatest number never attempt,) they ascend the steeps of wisdom and virtue more readily than the other. They are less encumbered by the load of selfishness; and, if they carry enough of ballast to prevent being blown into the

gulf of *sentiment*, they mount much higher than their stronger associates. It is of woman, therefore, that I shall at present speak; and I hasten to introduce you to one of the most fascinating it has ever been my fate to meet with. This lady's name is B—ll—r *, a widow of good fortune, and high connections, and who has on that account been accustomed to move in the highest circles; but her mind is so far superior to every adventitious distinction, that it is evident she has in every circle separated the chaff from the wheat. The use she has made of a classical education is to increase,

* This lady was equally distinguished in literary and fashionable circles: her mental attainments were so conspicuous, that few could converse with her without being tempted to ask what she had written; but Mrs. B—ll—r was too good a critic to become an author: her judgment was admirably correct, and her information almost universal; and it was once remarked of her, that, supposing her sex to be changed, she would be entitled to take her place in society with enlightened statesmen and accomplished scholars. The friendship she had formed with Mrs. Hamilton subsisted till her death.

not the knowledge of facts, but the number of ideas. She has travelled over Europe, and been introduced to the first circles at all its courts. But where others in the same situations saw lords and ladies, she has evidently examined character. All her anecdotes are, therefore, not only amusing, but instructive. All her observations betray a penetrating, a candid, and ingenuous mind; and her manners are more perfectly pleasing than those of any person I have yet seen. You will not be surprised that such a woman should have attracted us so powerfully, as to have led us to give up some other parties for the pleasure of her conversation. That pleasure would have been doubled to us if it had been shared by you; nor could my sister and I help figuring to ourselves the delight with which you would have listened to her on Saturday evening, when we met at her lodgings Mrs. B———, a woman deservedly esteemed of first-rate understanding, Mrs. De L——,

wife to the celebrated geologist, who is of the same description, and our valuable old friend Dr. Maclaine. I cannot do justice to the conversation, so shall only say, that I never returned from any more highly gratified."

The first volume of the *Letters on Education* which had been published in 1801, procured the author the acquaintance or correspondence of many celebrated individuals. Speaking of a letter she had received from Dugald Stewart, she observes, with characteristic simplicity, "it would be a poor affectation to say, that I was not flattered by such praise from a character so distinguished."

The visitors and residents of Bath at this period composed a brilliant society; and Miss Hamilton was on terms of intimacy with many persons of the first quality. On this occasion she remarks, "I am sensible

of the advantages attending an opportunity of making observations upon people in every sphere. I love to trace the influence of situation in forming the mind, and to observe the rise of those opinions and prejudices which form the character."

From April, 1802, to September, 1803, Miss Hamilton and Mrs. Blake led a wandering life, visiting Wales, the lakes of Westmoreland, and Scotland. The commencement of this tour was agreeably detailed in a letter to Mrs. G——.

"You have, doubtless, heard of the two friends whose retirement at Llangollen has long been the object of admiration and curiosity. On the 22d we reached Llangollen; and from our reception at the inn in the village, when it was known that we were going to visit the *ladies*, we formed no inadequate idea of the veneration in which they were held in the neighbourhood.

In a few minutes Lady E. B. and Miss P. were with us; and in the first half-hour we were sufficiently acquainted to lose all idea of having been hitherto strangers. They are, indeed, characters of a very superior stamp, with just such a degree of difference in their dispositions, as serves to give mutual support, while in all essentials they are perfectly congenial.

" A view of the natural beauties of Llangollen, its picturesque mountains, and wooded vale, watered by the Dee, would alone have amply recompensed us for the journey; but the charming society, which formed the animated part of the picture, was still more interesting than any other object. The cottage is the quintessence of taste, elegance, and comfort; and the ladies have created a little paradise around them. Twenty-four years have elapsed since the plan was formed, and every day has increased their satisfaction in its accomplishment. The few days we spent with them

passed in that sort of enthusiastic delight so seldom experienced when the days of youthful ardour are gone."

From the fairy haunts of Llangollen, the sisters proceeded to Liverpool, where Miss Hamilton found much to engage her esteem and admiration. Of Dr. Currie, in particular, she never spoke but with enthusiasm. Nor was her own merit unappreciated by that distinguished man, who one day observed to Mr. M'Neill: "That "Miss Hamilton is a clever, clear-headed "creature: When we are all arguing and "disputing on what we cannot determine "on, she comes in with one of her short "remarks, and sets us right in an instant, "by *hitting the nail exactly on the head.*"

From the elegant hospitality of Liverpool, the travellers passed to the romantic retirement of the lakes; from whence Miss Hamilton transmitted the following lively description of their situation:—

" June 19th.

" Highly was I last night gratified by the receipt of my dear girl's dear letter; and eagerly did my heart grasp at the hopes it held out to me of a pleasure that, in our present situation, would certainly be beyond all expression. But, conscious of the vivid colouring which your lively imagination throws over every object, I should think it unpardonable to aid its delusive power by creating a single hope, in which there is a possibility of disappointment. Our mountains are grand, our lakes are beautiful; but neither lakes nor mountains can supply the place of a thousand comforts and conveniences which habit converts into necessaries in the civilised world, but which are here unknown. Since the weather has been cold, rainy, and tempestuous (which it has been all this month), we have found the full truth of this observation; — confined to a little, stifled, smoky hole, incommoded by the noise of the fa-

mily, plagued with ignorant domestics, without books, or the means of procuring them; and, were it not for shame, we should, I believe, have been tempted to leave lakes and mountains behind us. Still, when the sun shines, the beauty of the country affords us much enjoyment, and, in all our little grievances, we have the comfort of a kind neighbour to apply to — a lady from Lancaster, who has taken the only pretty cottage ever erected in this country, and which happily is within a walking distance. She has two nieces with her, very sweet girls; and with this little party we contrive to have a laugh at all the litte misadventures which occur. The want of books is to me a serious evil, as I am afraid it will defeat, in a great measure, my plan. * Mr. —— obligingly offers me all he has; but the number is small, and not in the course of study I intended to

* It was her intention to compose the Memoirs of Agrippina.

pursue. — Thus far I had written on Wednesday; since when the weather has been so fine, that I have been tempted to retouch the sombre shades of the picture; but it is perhaps best to let you see it in all different points of view. I shall now, however, given you a new sketch, taken from a little excursion of yesterday.

" Immediately after breakfast our neighbour, Miss ——, my sister and I, in a chaise, and the Miss —— on foot, set out for Ambleside, and from thence to Mr. ——'s at Brathay, (a mile further,) one of the finest rides of five miles that can be imagined. In the Brathay river (whose rapid stream here unites with the Rydal, and falls into the lake), we took boat, and, in about two hours' and a half hard rowing, we reached the village of Bowness, which is considered the finest situation on Windermere. When on the water, the lake, from the appearance of a fine river, changes into that of an arm of the sea; imagination

can conceive nothing so grand as the perpetual shifting of the mountain-scenery, or so beautiful as the shading off of the piece, from stupendous rocks to sloping banks, covered with verdure. A chief view in going to Bowness was to look at the accommodation it affords; and there was offered a temptation which I do not think we shall be able to resist. The lodgings are, indeed, a wing of the inn, but the inn itself is not like a public one, as it is only occasionally frequented. It is only a mile distance from a Mr. ——'s to whom we have recommendations, and whose library would furnish all I want; besides the vicinity of the Bishop of Llandaff, the ladies of whose family express a kind wish to have us near them. In short, the situation is, in every respect, so much more eligible than Tail End *, which is completely cut off from all communication with the world, that we

* On Grasmere Lake.

have a great notion of trying the exchange; and, while we are in this sort of uncertainty, should be sorry that you took your determination, as *we must have you near us*, and are but too sensible that here this would be impossible."

In this remote situation, the celebrity of Miss Hamilton procured attentions from several distinguished families. Bishop Watson * became her intimate acquaintance: Miss Elizabeth Smith †, then in the bloom of health and beauty, and her at-

* Of this distinguished prelate Miss Hamilton thus writes to Mrs. Gregory: "We are more and more delighted with the Bishop's conversation, which is always a first-rate feast; the sentiments are always so just, and expressed with so much energy, yet without the least degree of dogmatism: he is always cheerful, even sometimes playful; but never without dignity: in short, he is a man of a million, whom I shall ever consider it a happiness to have known."

† Miss Smith then resided with her family in a small cottage at Conniston, eight miles from Bowness, a distance she often walked before breakfast.

tractive family, often visited her retreat; and many fashionable tourists, who were traversing the country, lingered an hour at the hospitable inn. Nor was Miss Hamilton herself always stationary: she made excursions to the Cumberland Lakes; and on visiting Keswick did not forget to explore the picturesque spot distinguished by the poet Gray.* For such excursions Miss Hamilton found little leisure. Engaged either in writing or in preparing to write the Memoirs of Agrippina, she had a pursuit which constantly engrossed her attention, and almost rendered her independent of society. The original object of this work was to illustrate by biographical examples the speculative principles assumed in the *Letters on Education*. Whether biography is a proper vehicle for

* Some of her most delightful hours were spent with Mrs. Smith at Conniston, when she was often enticed on the Lake, on which the Miss Smiths navigated their pleasure-boat with a facility and grace never surpassed, even by the fair Ellen of Walter Scott.

illustrating philosophical principles, is a question that might lead to much interesting discussion; but there can be no doubt that Agrippina (which exhibits, in a small compass, a correct epitome of Roman laws, customs, and manners,) is entitled to rank with the best school classics in a young lady's library; and in that view alone must form a valuable addition to English literature. *

Agrippina is preposterously classed with novels; and an opinion has been commonly entertained that it is, in reality, a sort of biographical romance. No idea could be more unfounded. The author, directed by her learned friends, was indefatigable in

* The Marcus Flaminius of Miss Knight possesses great merit, but it is a *novel;* and the ingenious and learned author, however correct in her descriptions and allusions to antiquity, was unavoidably under the necessity of mixing fact with fiction, and of sometimes introducing modern manners and British sentiments.

collecting documents and procuring materials for an authentic work. Through the medium of translation, she had been conversant with the best historians, annalists, poets, and orators of ancient Rome; and she was guided by the most esteemed modern writers on the subject of antiquities, laws, and usages.* When doubts or difficulties occurred, she communicated her scruples to the scholar or philosopher who was most competent to resolve them. Far from indulging in fictitious embellishments, she has not even attempted to fill up the chasm occasionally left in the narrative; and she was careful to substantiate every fact by reference to classical authority. The only instance in which she allowed

* An occasional observation of Bishop Watson is mentioned in one of her letters: "On looking over the books I had chosen from the library, which consisted chiefly of translations from classical authors, the Bishop took occasion to remark the great necessity there was for a complete series of translations of the Greek and Roman historians; a work which, he was sure, would put some thousands in the pocket of any one qualified to undertake it."

herself to deviate from this strict precision, is in the introduction of a conversation between Agrippina and the countrywoman of Arminius, in which the chaste matrons of Germany are strikingly contrasted with the ladies of degenerate Rome. The introduction is spirited and elegant; the style rises occasionally to eloquence. Thus, in adopting the opinion of Hooke, that the declension of Roman virtue was gradual, and that Cæsar only finished what Sylla and Pompey had begun, we have this striking passage: — "Roman liberty did not die a violent but a natural death. The dagger of Brutus might, like the Galvanic shock, produce a short and convulsive motion; but the animating soul of liberty had fled for ever." *

When Miss Hamilton and Mrs. Blake left their romantic station at Bowness, it was

* It is remarkable, that whilst Agrippina was in the press, Mr. Fox, in one of his speeches, gave to the same image a similar application.

with feelings of regret, which were soon dissipated in the agreeable and animating circles of Edinburgh. Many circumstances conspired to render this sojourn peculiarly delightful to Miss Hamilton, who never was insensible to the attractions of superior society. She observes, in a letter to her young friend, "I went last night to a ball, where I spent my time most pleasantly till one in the morning. I do not believe that either London or Paris ever saw so much genius in one dance. It is, indeed, seldom that so many young men of distinguished talents have sprung up at one time, or in one place. Of those I can only give you names; but they are names that will be conspicuous in the annals of fame. Be patient, and I shall satisfy you; for well I know you have been all this time asking, what of Mrs. F——? how do you like Mrs. F——? Well, not to keep you longer in suspense, I not only *like* but *love* her. You would, *I am sure*, *adore* her; but I

don't go quite so far: she has, however, contrived to steal no small portion both of my esteem and affection; and, though I am upon my guard, continues to carry on her depredations in the most successful manner."

During this season, Miss Hamilton became acquainted with Miss Edgeworth, who was introduced to her at Edinburgh, and with whom at the first interview she was pleased —at the second, charmed,—proceeding in regular gradation, through the progressive sentiments of cordiality, attachment, and affection. She was ever disposed, not only to recognise merit, but to love it; and it was often her generous boast, that women of talents, by their reciprocations of kindness and friendship, verified the fable of the nine sister muses.

The final result of this excursion was, that in the following autumn (1804), Miss

Hamilton and her sister transferred their residence to the northern metropolis. After the publication of Agrippina, she allowed herself an interval of repose; and, in the summer of 1804, revisited London, for the pleasure of seeing Dr. G——'s family, with whom she had enjoyed no personal intercourse during some years. It was on her return to Scotland that she was informed of the pension conferred on her by His Majesty, as an acknowledgment that her literary talents had been meritoriously exerted in the cause of religion and virtue.* At this period, she was earnestly solicited by a nobleman to superintend the education of his children, who had been unhappily deprived of a mother's care. To engage her compliance, he offered a separate establish-

* It is notorious, that grants of this kind are never conferred without some particular channel of recommendation: but Miss Hamilton was no sooner mentioned than approved; and the Prime Minister paid a spontaneous tribute to her talents, which enhanced the value of the gift.

ment; the choice of the governess, on whom was to devolve the subordinate office of tuition; and the absolute control of every thing connected with her department. Although Miss Hamilton (as appears from a letter to Mrs. Smith of Conniston*) had long wished for an opportunity of practically illustrating her hints on education, she was not easily induced to listen to a proposal which she was sensible must in some degree militate against her personal independence; and all that His Lordship could obtain from her was a promise to reside in his family as a friend for a limited period, and to assist him in forming proper arrangements for the future instruction of his children. At the expiration of six months she resigned the trust, but could not detach her affection from her adopted children, for whose happiness and improvement she never ceased to feel the most tender solicitude. After this separation she beguiled the com-

* *Vide* the second volume.

parative solitude of a winter spent at Westham*, in composing the "Letters to the Daughter of a Nobleman," which were published in the spring of 1806, and obtained a most favourable reception from the public. The concluding pages are dictated by such genuine feelings of affection, as must irresistibly make their way to the heart.

"And now, my dearest love, the painful task remains of bidding you a long, perhaps a last farewell. The promise which I made you of doing you all the good in my power, I have endeavoured to accomplish. I have done it unto God, and not unto men; and if the sincerity of the motive finds acceptance, I shall not go without my reward. May my prayers be heard! and it will be given in the shape of a blessing upon my instructions.

* Westham in Essex, where she was once more the neighbour of Dr. and Mrs. Gregory.

" With regard to the younger objects of my anxious solicitude, their tender age forbids the hope that much of what they learned from me will remain with them. Still I cannot but flatter myself, that the dispositions to benevolence, to charity, and to gratitude, which I zealously endeavoured to inspire, may retain their influence in the heart. Should these letters reach their hands when the hand that writes them has mouldered into dust, though they may serve to recall some endearing memorial of the tenderness of my affection, it will appear to their minds like a distant dream: but you, my dearest Lady Elizabeth, you never can forget me: our paths through life lie far asunder; mine leads to the quiet and peaceful home, which, for your sake, I was induced to leave; to relations, endeared by every virtue; to the society of faithful, long-tried friends, and the soothing intercourse of esteem and affection. These are the blessings which Providence

has poured into my cup of life: nor let me forget to add the zest that is given them by the enjoyment of leisure and tranquillity."

The return of Mrs. Hamilton (as she now chose to be designated) to Edinburgh, diffused, through the circle of her acquaintance, a satisfaction in which she cordially participated. In the situation she had lately quitted, she had possessed many of the privileges appropriated to rank, wealth, and fashion. In the home to which she was restored, she could enjoy the partners of her youth, and the companions of her choice; and in the heartfelt glee produced by this delightful consciousness, composed the pleasing song of "My ain Fireside*," of which the second stanza most happily describes her feelings:

* The song of "My ain Fire-side," has been composed and published by Miss Hamond, to whom the words had been communicated by the author.

"Ance mair, (Gude be praised,) round my ain heart-
some ingle,
Wi' the freinds o' my youth I may cordially mingle,
Nae forms to compel me to seem woe or glad,
I may laugh when I'm merry, or sigh when I'm sad;
Nae falsehood to dread, and nae malice to fear,
But truth to delight me, and kindness to cheer;
O! the best road to happiness ever I tried,
Was the road brought me home to my ain fire-side."

Of the happiness which Mrs. Hamilton had commemorated in verse, she gives an equally lively description in the following passage of prose:—"The greatest symptom of old age that I have yet perceived, is a sensible diminution of ardour in the pursuit of new objects, and a great repugnance to the thoughts of any sort of change. One cause of this is probably attributable to increased indolence; but I should be ungrateful not to trace it to another source, rejoicing, as I do, in a consciousness of happiness that increases with my increasing years. I am, indeed, surrounded by blessings of every kind; for though I have no-

thing to disturb, I have enough to employ my mind, and more than enough of occupation for every moment of my time. I have lately indeed had so much to do for others, that I have had no time to do any thing for myself: not even to finish a little tale for the lower orders, which I began some months ago." At this period Mrs. Hamilton, in conjunction with several ladies, was actively engaged in establishing for the lower order of females a House of Industry, which promises to be permanently beneficial to the community. * The tale so carelessly mentioned was no other than Glenburnie, which she had begun, *con amore*, but afterwards neglected, till happen-

* For the use of the young persons educated in the House of Industry, she composed a little work intituled "Exercises in Religious Knowledge," on a plan which obliges the pupil to prove, by answers to be given in her own words, her attention, and her conception of the instruction given by the teacher. This publication, which received the sanction of Bishop Sandford and the Rev. Mr. Alison, was published in 1809.

ing to read it one evening at her fire-side, where it excited mirth, she was encouraged to resume the plan she had almost abandoned; and finally Glenburnie, not without some diffidence on the part of the publisher, was committed to the press. To the honour of North Britain, its success was equal to its merits: in Edinburgh, the demand for the work was such as induced the publishers to print a cheap edition, which circulated to the Highlands, where even the genius of the mountains confessed the influence of good sense, and the importance of domestic economy.* In England, the *Cottagers* were equally caressed. "I canna be fashed" became a popular phrase; and the name of Mrs. M'Clarty resounded in the polished circles of fashion, of elegance, and beauty. But although Mrs. M'Clarty be a prominent

* In Stirlingshire, *Glenburnie* was read with such avidity, that Isabel Irvine (the attendant of Mrs. Hamilton's juvenile years) put some money into her purse by lending her single copy for a penny each reader.

personage, it is highly injurious to the real merit of Glenburnie to consider it merely as a lesson of good housewifery. The characters are well drawn and well sustained, and may be constantly recognized as individual men and women, for whom we intuitively divine a resemblance. Glenburnie affords a striking example that deep and intense interest may be excited by a narrative composed of the most simple and even homely materials, but which exhibits the real workings of the human heart. The weak indulgence of the doting mother, — the struggles of pride and tenderness in the fond but bigotted father, — the transition from wayward obduracy to shame and remorse in the stubborn yet not impenetrable son; all these, though ordinary circumstances, and detailed with fact-matter plainness, insensibly lead to a catastrophe which proves that the secret of pathos is to be found in the force of truth. In the lighter parts of this work, the humour is no less

genuine than the characters. Glenburnie might be called a Tale in the manner of Wilkie. Equally remote from the distortion of caricature or the colouring of romance, the picture is full of life, and without seeking to dazzle the imagination, surprises the heart.

During two succeeding years, Mrs. Hamilton engaged in no new literary undertaking. In this interval a heavy calamity had visited that home of cheerfulness and peace, which seemed consecrated to domestic felicity. The death of the excellent Dr. Gregory was an irreparable loss! not only to his family, but to all his intimate connections. To none could his place be filled, since each had discovered in his character some peculiar quality of mind or heart never to be looked for again. To Mrs. Hamilton the blow was peculiarly severe; and she emphatically exclaimed, "Never since the day that laid my beloved

brother in the grave, have I been so overwhelmed with sorrow!" The following letter, in which she endeavoured to administer consolation, is a memorial not only of her friendship, but her piety: "Alas! my dear, my best beloved friend, how feebly do words express the feelings with which I am at this moment overwhelmed! Could your sorrows be lessened by participation, how quickly would the burthen be lightened! for who is there among your friends that does not at this moment participate in your affliction? But though the extent of your loss is known to all, few can appreciate it as I do. By how many tender ties your heart was knit to the dear object of your affection! Let it, in the midst of grief, be matter of joy and consolation, that not one of these ties is broken; they remain indissoluble, and will remain through the countless ages of eternity.

"What springs of the earth is earthly, and, like all earthly things, is subject to change and

to decay: this mortal frame, and all the passions that are connected with it, are in their nature transient; but the objects of our love and veneration are, like the God from whom they emanate, imperishable. Often since yesterday, have I said to myself, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?' Does he not still live, live in the truest sense of the word? disencumbered from all that impeded his progress in the search of truth; his faith rewarded, his benevolence gratified, his faculties enlarged, and fitted for the enjoyment of that felicity which was prepared for him before the heavens or earth were made, and which shall be his when the heavens and the earth are no more. Yes, my beloved friend, I feel that our sorrow is selfish; it is a part of this earthly nature which still clings to the dust; and until this earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we must, in some shape or other, be subject to its influence: yet a little

while, and we too shall be free: he is gone but a short way upon the journey before us; and who shall say what trials might have awaited him. Had he been the one that was left to travel it alone, his strength might have failed, and the trial proved greater than he could endure; if Infinite Wisdom has seen fit to inflict on you the hard and difficult task, you will be supported through it by infinite mercy — the God of all consolation will not leave you comfortless — if on you, by this mournful dispensation, a double duty has devolved, doubt not that to you a double portion of strength shall be given. You will be enabled to live for your children; and rousing from the lethargy of grief, will go on in the performance of your duties, till, in the words of our Divine Master, you likewise can say, 'Father, I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do.' I can say no more, for this stroke has fallen upon me very heavily. To the almighty Disposer of Events, I ear-

nestly recommend my friend, in incessant and almost involuntary prayer."

The sympathy of Mrs. Hamilton was not merely exhibited in expressions of condolence; since it impelled her to revisit London with the hope of infusing cheerfulness into the bosom of her afflicted friend. On her return to Scotland, she was occupied in revising her works, and in answering the demands of a numerous and constantly increasing correspondence.

With simple and uniform habits, Mrs. Hamilton had never to complain of a dull or monotonous existence. The morning, whenever her infirmities permitted such an appropriation, was devoted to study. At two o'clock she descended to the drawing-room, where she commonly found some intimate friend ready to receive her. If no engagement intervened, the interval from seven till ten was occupied with some in-

teresting book, which, according to her good aunt Marshall's rule, was read aloud, for the benefit of the whole party. On Monday she deviated from the general system, by admitting visitors all the morning; and such was the esteem for her character, and such the relish for her society, that this private *levee* was attended by the most brilliant persons in Edinburgh, and commonly protracted till a late hour. But it was in the *heartsome ingle nook*, by her *ain fireside*, when the world was shut out, and its cares, and conflicts, and pretensions consigned to temporary oblivion, that Mrs. Hamilton was most truly known, and most perfectly enjoyed. It was then that her spirits resumed their native buoyancy; that her original raciness of humour was tasted, and by her peculiar talents, which were rather appropriated than displayed to the few select friends encircling her hospitable hearth, she might have suggested the recollection of the diamond in the Arabian tale,

which was not valued as a gem, but admired for its useful light. Of anecdote she was inexhaustible; and in narrative she dramatised with such effect, that she almost personated those whom she described. But it was not alone in humour, in anecdote, or talent, that resided the charm with which she invited and almost compelled to enjoyment. The secret of her power was in the ardour and benevolence of her nature; it was by this she won the frigid to unbend, and the melancholy to smile, the diffident to dismiss his scruples, the worldly to suspend his calculations. In those never-to-be-forgotten moments, not only was her cheerfulness diffused, but her frankness communicated: it was the heart that spoke, and the heart that listened; and each departed from the social feast with expanded faculties of benevolence and enjoyment.

The following animated sketch of her life and character, from the pen of a most

intimate friend, will convey an appropriate, almost a personal, idea of Mrs. Hamilton to the reader : —

" I first became acquainted with Mrs. Hamilton in 1804. A female literary character was even at that time a sort of phenomenon in Scotland. Even though most Scotchwomen read, and were not inferior to their southern neighbours in general information and good taste, very few had ventured to incur the dangerous distinction of authorship. The vulgar term of ' blue stocking,' was more hackneyed, even in the polished circles of our literary metropolis, than you can easily imagine. It was, therefore, most fortunate for the interests of her sex, that when an authoress did appear amongst us, she should be one whose kind heart and unpretending manners, should set the sneers of prejudice at defiance. Mrs. Hamilton was exactly that person. No one that ever knew her could discover that

she founded any pretensions on authorship, or that she valued her literary reputation on any other ground but as a means of usefulness. There is no question, however, that her reputation for talents gave her a very high place in the society of Edinburgh. Her house was the resort, not only of the intellectual, but of the gay and even of the fashionable; and her cheerfulness, good sense, and good humour, soon reconciled every one to the literary lady. So much were her morning levees crowded the first six months she passed in Edinburgh, that I remember her friend Mr. M'Neill told her, he really believed she had as many visitors as the Irish giant.

"It was at this time I had the happiness of being introduced to her. An author of Mrs. Hamilton's reputation appeared to me a very formidable person; and when Mr. M'Neil proposed to me to visit her, a mixed sensation of respect and fear, of

diffidence and curiosity, made me wish, yet hesitate, to accompany him. My fears, however, were instantly removed by the frankness and cordiality of her reception. The first half-hour's conversation convinced me, that she was one of the most unaffected, intelligent, and liberal-minded women I had ever met with; and a very close intimacy of twelve years confirmed me in that opinion.

" It was not only by correcting the vulgar prejudices against literary women, that Mrs. Hamilton conferred the highest benefit on the society of Edinburgh, but by giving a new direction to the pursuits of her own sex, and by extending the sphere of female usefulness. Soon after she came to reside permanently in Edinburgh, she found it necessary to confine herself to one morning in the week for receiving visitors; and by this economy of time, she was enabled to devote much of her attention to the management of charitable institutions, par-

ticularly the House of Industry, — an institution supported by public subscription, which affords employment and instruction to the female poor. She associated several ladies with her in this benevolent office, and always presided at their meetings, where humanity towards the individual objects, and judicious economy in the application of the funds, governed her whole conduct; and it will be long before those who heard her affectionate exhortations to the little scholars, as she distributed the prizes to the most deserving, will forget the benevolence and wisdom of her counsels. Her *Cottagers of Glenburnie* is a lasting monument of the interest she took in bettering the condition of the poor. Perhaps few books have been more extensively useful. The peculiar humour of this work, by irritating our national pride, has produced a wonderful spirit of improvement. The cheap edition is to be found in every village-library; and Mrs. M'Clarty's exam-

ple has *provoked* many a Scottish housewife into cleanliness and good order.

" If the active benevolence of our excellent friend was worthy of imitation, so was her exemplary submission to suffering. No one enjoyed less vigorous health, yet no one was so habitually cheerful. It is the sad consequence of long-continued illness to produce peevishness and selfishness of character. No person was ever more free from these faults than Mrs. Hamilton. I have heard her defend the claims of contemporary genius in those of her own sex, with a degree of generous ardour and enthusiastic admiration, which a cold or selfish nature could not comprehend. She was always disposed to cherish talents, and encourage the aspirations after knowledge, in the young of both sexes ; and there was a sincerity and zeal in her good will that made all professions superfluous.

"It is consoling to think, that, notwithstanding her ill health, Mrs. Hamilton enjoyed life extremely. Her happiness was the constant object of her sister's care; and to that sister she was most tenderly attached. She was preserved from the languor of *ennui* by the natural cheerfulness of her temper, and the activity of her mind; and, above all, she was supported by a religion at once spiritual and practical, which secured the purest motives, and confirmed the brightest hopes.

"To those who knew and confided in her, as I did, her loss is irreparable; and even of those who occasionally enjoyed her friendly intercourse, how many there are who feel the blank her death has made in society!" *

In 1812, the state of Mrs. Hamilton's health excited so much alarm, that it was

* The foregoing pages are extracted from a letter addressed to the writer of these memoirs.

deemed advisable she should spend the ensuing winter in England. Her first station was at Kenilworth, where, in the month of October, she arrived with her sister and a young female relative. This salutary change was attended with the happiest effects; and she soon addressed a much-loved friend whom she had left in Edinburgh, in a tone of cheerfulness which marks the progress of her recovery: — "I have long classified my friends and acquaintances under the several heads descriptive of the state of the atmosphere, in barometrical and thermometrical indexes; and having invariably found an hour's chat with dear Mrs. F. put me in the same state as *genial warmth*, and *settled fair*, I may justly consider her as the summer of my life, a summer which I hope to enjoy to life's latest hour. Our residence at Kenilworth was rendered very pleasant by the unwearied kindness of our friends, and the polite attention of all their circle of acquaintance;

and above all by the consciousness that we were contributing to the happiness of those in whom we are very deeply interested." In adverting to the improved state of her constitution she observes:—"It is evidently not to idleness that I am indebted for the health I have enjoyed, as I have been very diligent, and had the pleasure of writing the charming word *Finis* the day before I came away. I have now only a few chapters to revise, and the introduction to write, in order to be completely emancipated." From Bath Mrs. Hamilton proceeded to Clifton, where she received a copy of her long-promised work intituled, *Popular Essays on the Elementary Principles of the Human Mind.* As this work was in reality supplemental to the *Letters on Education*, it is to be regretted that it was not produced in the epistolary form, which to female readers is peculiarly attractive. It is the object of the excellent author to establish as a fundamental prin-

ciple, the opposition of the selfish propensities to the cultivation of benevolence and the attainment of felicity. These volumes, which are rather of a religious than philosophical cast, illustrate principles that perfectly harmonise with the pure precepts of the Gospel; and from her private journal it will appear, that the author had sedulously laboured to regulate her own conduct by that high standard of rectitude, which she recommends to general imitation. The private journal, already often alluded to, consisted of a series of papers, composed with a view to assist the writer in the exercise of self-examination, which she considered as the basis of moral and religious improvement. In this practice she persisted seven-and-twenty years, the first number being dated 1788, the last, September, 1815. The following extract selected from the original MSS. will sufficiently demonstrate how perfectly her character harmonised with itself in the different stages of life,

and how much she retained of her youthful sensibilities, long after the season of youth had passed away.

" Edinburgh, March 14th, 1803.

" Eleven years have this day elapsed since, in the departure of my beloved brother, the bitterness of death passed over me. In him my affections were from infancy wrapped up: all the love, the admiration, the esteem, which other characters have separately excited, were in him united. Betwixt us, there was a sympathy of soul, a correspondence of sentiment and of feeling, of which few can form any conception. Our minds were cast in the same mould, operated upon by the same circumstances, excited by the same objects. It was by viewing my own character in him, that I acquired confidence in my own powers, respect for my own virtues, and a consciousness of my own infirmities. Endeared as he was by every tie of friendship,

of confidence, and of affection, I considered him as the animating soul of my existence. With him, my every hope of happiness expired. I submitted to the dispensation of Providence without repining; but all possibility of further enjoyment in this life seemed at an end; for with every enjoyment his idea was so strongly associated, that I did not think the separation could ever be made. How little do they know of the constitution of the human mind who talk of indulging "eternal sorrow." The goodness of the Great Creator has, happily, rendered it impossible. The mind, overburdened with affliction, is impelled to seek relief. During the violence of its first emotions, it indeed obstinately rejects every idea that is not in unison with the present feeling; but as no strong emotion can long exist in the extreme, but must necessarily lose its force, and become in some degree exhausted by its own efforts, ideas less and less connected with the object which excited

it will gradually present themselves, suggesting trains of thought which cheat the mind into tranquillity. Long as it was before I experienced the full benefit of this relief which the God of nature has provided, I did experience it. As time advanced, new objects of interest arose; and though the memory of my dearest, my beloved brother must ever be graven on my inmost soul, neither the strength of my affection, nor the deep sense of the loss I had sustained, could prevent sorrow from being changed into tender melancholy. Even melancholy itself in time was dissipated, and the natural cheerfulness of my temper resumed its tone. My lot has indeed fallen in pleasant places. My life has been a series of blessings and of enjoyment: my sorrows have been few; and though, from the keenness of my feelings, they have been severe, they have borne no proportion to my pleasures. The pleasures which my natural temper and the turn of my mind

have ever rendered most delightful, are those which arise from the communication of sentiment, and which give a lively exercise to the sympathies of the heart, and the faculties of the understanding. In the society of my dearest brother those were first called forth; and in losing him, I thought I had lost them for ever. Blessed be God! this has not been the case. Since losing him, I have enjoyed the happiness of living in a very superior society, of forming intimacies with many of the best, the wisest, and the worthiest of human characters. I have commenced many friendships, which I hope and trust will neither cease in this world, nor in the next, but which will continue to form a part of my happiness when all imperfection shall have been done away."

After an interval of ten years, she continued to write with the same energy of feeling.

" Ireland, July 1. 1813.

" How little did I ever expect to celebrate the anniversary of my birth, in the land of my nativity! how little expect to number so many years of life! — years, crowned with blessings, and distinguished by providential protection! O that they had been marked by improvement in Christian virtue! The last year has, indeed, been a year of unmixed enjoyment, suited to a rational nature, and affording food for delightful reflections, which I hope will improve and expand my heart."

On leaving Clifton, Mrs. Hamilton had proceeded, with her sister, and a young relation, by a most interesting route to Ireland, which she emphatically calls the land of her nativity, and where she spent three happy months, enjoying its genius, witnessing its munificence, and participating in its hospitality. Yet from these brilliant and attractive scenes she returned to Edin-

burgh, and to her domestic connections, with augmented attachment.*

Amongst all her many new and brilliant connections, the *castle-building* friend was not forgotten, and the following letter exhibits the genuine feelings of a heart whose kindness was inexhaustible : —

" December 16th.

" Much as I rejoiced once more to see your hand-writing, the pleasure was not unalloyed, but was on the contrary counterbalanced by many painful feelings and regrets. It gives me exquisite pain to think

* In her journal she thus alludes to her domestic situation : — " Again restored to the comforts of my most comfortable home, let me record the gratitude of my heart for all the blessings which I have so abundantly experienced : and now that I am, as it were, to commence a new life, let me renew my firm purpose to live hereafter as becomes one who believes that God is now the *witness*, and will, ere long, be the *judge*, of all my thoughts, words, and actions."

that you must have construed my long silence into wilful neglect, — a crime, towards you, of which I am incapable; and I solemnly assure you, that had I not firmly believed that my sister had fulfilled her intention of writing to you before we left Hagley, and after we had finally arranged our route, I should rather have denied myself any pleasure we enjoyed, than have permitted you to remain in ignorance of our motions. You will pardon me for saying so much on this subject; but there are few things that could more distress me, than that my dear ——— should suspect me of careless neglect or indifference, — the being on earth whose affection she may with most assured confidence depend on. Oh, that we had you now beside us, that we might try effectually to soothe and cheer those spirits which sickness has depressed; and by the cordial balm of friendship aid the power of medicine in effecting your complete recovery! You do not men-

tion the nature of your complaint, and I therefore will hope that it is not formidable, but will yield to care, and a regular use of the means prescribed. Be careful, then, my dear friend, and let not the mind defeat by its exertions what is done for the restoration of its weak partner. I know how much your social spirit feels the deprivation; but if necessary to your health, you must submit for a time to the evils of confinement, that you may be enabled afterwards to enjoy society without injury. I wish you could, like me, find pleasure in rug-making: it is far better for the health than book-making; and, I assure you, I find the choice of worsteds a far more amusing study than the choice of words. In both works, it is the brilliancy of the colours that is all in all."

"May 5th.

"My dear friend's long, kind, and welcome letter ought surely not to have been

thus long unanswered. But you know that my pen is, alas! no longer the pen of a ready writer. Age has prematurely shed its benumbing influence over every thing but my heart: its warmth is, thank God, unimpaired; and while it continues to glow, my dear ——— will have a place in its kindliest corner. I am anxious for your fame, my dear friend, — but am most anxious for it, on account of the cheering influence of success upon the health and spirits. To a mind extremely susceptible of lively emotions, the consciousness of deserving applause is not always sufficient: it stands in need of sympathy: and, until age has reduced the mind's temperature, philosophy will in vain labour to prevent those sudden variations in its thermometer, which a greater or lesser degree of general sympathy occasions. I will flatter myself, that the account you give of your health, was written at a moment of casual depression, and that ere now you have experienced

better nights and better days, free from sickness and open to enjoyment. I, for my share, am as well as it is possible for a poor gouty and rheumatic mortal to be, during the nipping cold of a bitter north-east blast. I have not yet dared to venture out; and if this east wind continues, shall be kept a prisoner till July; and am indeed so lame, that I fear I shall soon be unable to walk up or down stairs; in which case, we must change our house, for I cannot utterly relinquish society. * Thank God, my own

* No one knew better than Mrs. Hamilton to appreciate the advantages of society. In another letter, she observes; "Of all the privileges enjoyed by the lords "of the creation, there is none so enviable or so esti- "mable as that of having it in their power to form a "society to their own liking. Any young man in the "station of a gentleman, may, with agreeable manners, "make his way to an acquaintance with characters of "superior stamp; he may gradually introduce himself "to the notice, at least to the company, of those from "whose conversation he can reap instruction; and is "under no necessity of being confined to the society "of uncongenial minds: whereas poor women cannot

fire-side abounds with comforts. We have within ourselves the materials of happiness; and it is our own faults if we do not thoroughly enjoy them."

It was the privilege of Mrs. Hamilton to be surrounded not only by admirers but by friends. Who, indeed, that truly knew her, but must wish to obtain a share in her affections? In every emergency of life, her counsels were invaluable, whether she sought to inspire hope, to supply energy, or administer consolation. From the scope of her writings it will easily be conceived that she took an affectionate interest in childhood, and in youth. And Miss Edgeworth has truly observed, that she *loved* the young: she delighted to excite their smiles, and was ready to participate in their gaiety. Alive to all the social charities, she watched,

---

" escape out of the rubbish in which they may happen " to be buried, but at the expense of many *rubs* and " *scratches*."

with almost maternal tenderness, the gradual unfolding of the bud to bloom and beauty, and, with more than maternal vigilance, embraced every opportunity of impressing on the inexperienced mind some salutary truth, or of directing its powers to laudable pursuits. Of the correct, yet delicate manner, in which these admonitory hints were conveyed, we have a pleasing example in the following little billet, addressed to a very young lady, of whose mother (one of her best beloved and most valued friends) she had just received an admirable sketch from her daughter's pencil.

"*To Miss G. F—.*

"A thousand thanks to my dear Grace for her kind and highly valued gift, a gift that is to me doubly precious, as presenting at once such a lively resemblance of my inestimable friend, and such a sweet memorial of your affection.

" Go on, my dear young friend, improving all the talents with which you are so richly endowed, and ever employing them to gladden and gratify others, and to produce for yourself, in addition to the admiration which talents produce, even to the worthless, the nobler tribute of heart-felt esteem, such esteem as that with which I remain,

" Sincerely your's,

" Eliza Hamilton." *

* By a melancholy and ever-to-be-lamented event, this little billet is rendered a memorial not only of the writer, but of her to whom it was addressed: the youthful artist is no more; the bright vision of hope which she was formed to realise is flown; the yet unclaimed meed of contemporary applause, perhaps the imperishable wreath of fame, is buried in an untimely grave. Richly as she had been endowed, she justified, by her application of its treasures, the bounty, the prodigality of nature. Her talents exhibited themselves equally by the pen and the pencil; her early pursuit of literature excited surprise; her spontaneous, or rather involuntary eloquence, inspired delight, and called forth unsought applause. With the sensibility and the imagination of a poet, she possessed a capacity for

The winter of 1813 was not, as Mrs. Hamilton had intended, commemorated by any new literary undertaking: whilst she was engaged with the essays, she had planned

---

science, a love of truth, a correct propriety of taste, seldom found in a poetical character. In the moral, as in the intellectual part, the same amplitude of endowment was discovered; meek and magnanimous, ardent, yet tender in her affections; a soul of heroism was lodged in the gentlest of human bosoms, and her ingenuous countenance revealed the conflicts of enthusiasm with feminine timidity and youthful modesty. Fostered in the bosom of domestic felicity, a stranger to sorrow and to care, she learnt intuitively to sympathise with human sufferings, and found it necessary to her own happiness to alleviate them. Imbued with a genuine piety, she cultivated those religious feelings, which by many are only cherished as the solace of unfriended misfortune, but which in her were the aspirations of a pure spirit panting for perfection, and anticipating immortality. Should the reader suspect of exaggeration this faithful though imperfect sketch, he will not be without excuse, since, even to those who have known, who have loved her, who bear about her image stamped with eternal regret, it appears impossible that such another being should arise on that sphere from which this perfect vision of mental loveliness has vanished for ever!

many works ; yet, on examination, each was rejected. She sketched a novel ; but its progress was impeded by doubt and diffidence : and she sensibly experienced, that to live in cultivated society, whilst it refines taste, inevitably circumscribes invention.

When her habitual infirmities are recollected, it will appear extraordinary that she should have been so long able to struggle against them. During some weeks or months of every winter, she was almost wholly incapacitated for mental exertion ; and, in the most propitious season, she never could devote to her pen more than four or five hours of the day.

Exposed to all the evils attendant on a state of nervous irritability, she was incapable of that self-collected abstraction so useful in literary pursuits, and unfitted by the most trifling interruption from performing her diurnal task : and that with such

impediments and disabilities, she should, in fifteen years, have published as many volumes, affords a striking example of what may be achieved by patience, energy, and perseverance. The variety of her sufferings could scarcely be surmised by those who were not domesticated beneath the same roof; even then, such was her habitual consideration for the comfort of others, that she not only suppressed the mention of her complaints, but endeavoured to banish the recollection that they existed; instead of repining at her lot, she often declared that the want of strength was more than compensated by exuberance of spirits, and the frequent recurrence of pain counterbalanced by large capacities for enjoyment. The approach of age appalled not her vigorous mind, though to her it was likely to be a state of more than common privation. She had, however, dwelt long enough on the idea to make it the subject of a sportive poem, which she one evening read with

a smiling countenance to her little family circle.

Is that Auld Age that's tirling at the pin?
I trow it is, — then haste to let him in:
Ye're kindly welcome, friend; na, dinna fear
To shaw yoursel', ye'll cause nae trouble here.
I ken there are wha tremble at your name,
As tho' ye brought wi' ye reproach or shame;
And wha, "a thousand lies wad bear the sin,"
Rather than own ye for their kith or kin:
But far frae shirking ye as a disgrace,
Thankfu' I am t'have lived to see thy face;
Nor s'all I ere disown ye, nor tak pride,
To think how long I might your visit bide,
Doing my best to mak ye weel respecked,
I'll no fear for your sake to be neglecked;
But now y'ere come, and through a' kind of weather
We're doomed frae this time forth to jog thegither,
I'd fain mak compact wi' ye, firm and strang,
On terms of fair giff gaff to haud out lang;
Gin thou'lt be civil, I s'all lib'ral be,
Witness the lang lang list o' what I'll gie;
First, then, I here mak owre for gude and ay,
A' youthfu' fancies, whether bright or gay,
Beauties and graces, too, I wad resign them,
But sair I fear 'twad cost ye fash to find them;
For 'gainst your dady, Time, they cou'd na stand,
Nor bear the grip o' his unsonsy hand;
But there's my skin, whilk ye may further crunkle,
And write your name at length in ilka wrunkle.

On my brown locks ye've leave to lay your paw,
And bleech them to your fancy white as snaw.
But look na, Age, sae wistfu' at my mouth,
As gin ye lang'd to pu' out ilka tooth!
Let them, I do beseech, still keep their places,
Though, gin ye wish't, ye're free to paint their faces.
My limbs I yield ye; and, if ye see meet,
To clap your icy shackles on my feet,
I'se no refuse; but if ye drive out gout,
Will bless you for't, and offer thanks devout.
Sae muckle wad I gi' wi' right good will,
But och! I fear, that maer ye look for still.
I ken by that fell glow'r and meaning shrug,
Ye'd slap your skinny fingers on each lug; *
And unca fain ye are, I trow, and keen,
To cast your misty powders in my een:
But, O' in mercy, spare my poor wee twinkers,
And I for ay s'all wear your chrystal blinkers!
Then bout my lugs I'd fain a bargain mak,
And gi' my hand, that I shall ne'er draw back.
Weel, then — wad ye consent their use to share,
'Twad serve us baith, and be a bargain rare.
Thus I wad ha't, when babbling fools intrude,
Gabbling their noisy nonsense, lang and loud:
Or when ill-nature, weel brush'd up by wit,
Wi' sneer sarcastic takes its aim to hit;
Or when detraction, meanest slave o' pride,
Spies out wee fau'ts, and seeks great worth to hide;

---

* For some years she had been occasionally subject to a slight degree of deafness.

Then mak me deaf, as deaf as deaf can be;
At a' sic times my lugs I lend to thee.
But when in social hour ye see combin'd
Genius and Wisdom — fruits o' heart and mind,
Good-sense, good-humour, wit in playfu' mood,
And Candour e'en frae ill extracting good;
Oh, then, auld friend, I maun ha' back my hearing,
To want it then wad be an ill past bearing.
Better to lonely sit i' the douf spence
Than catch the sough o' words without the sense.
Ye winna promise? Och ye're unko dour,
Sae ill to manage, and sae cauld and sour.
Nae matter — hail and sound I'll keep my heart,
Nor frae a crum o't s'all I ever part:
It's kindly warmth will ne'er be chill'd by a'
The cauldest breath your frozen lips can blaw.
Ye need na' fash your thumb, auld carl, nor fret,
For there Affection shall preserve its seat;
And though to tak my hearing ye rejoice,
Yet spite o' you I'll still hear Friendship's voice.
Thus, though ye tak the rest, it sha'na grieve me,
For ae blythe spunk o' spirits ye maun leave me;
And let me tell you in your lug, Auld Age,
I'm bound to travel wi' ye but ae stage.
Be't long or short, ye canna keep me back;
And, when we reach the end o't, ye maun pack;
For there we part for ever: late or air,
Another guess companion meets me there;
To whom ye — nill ye will ye — maun me bring;
Nor think that I'll be wae, or laith to spring
Fra your poor dosen'd side, ye carl uncouth,
To the blest arms of everlasting youth.

By him, whate'er ye've rifl'd, sto'wn, or ta'en,
Will a' be gi'en wi' interest back again:
Foreby a' gifts and graces, thousands moe
Than heart can think of, freely he'll bestoe.
Ye need na wonder, then, nor swell wi' pride,
Because I kindly welcome you, as guide,
To ane sae far your better. Now a's tauld,
Let us set out upo' our journey cauld;
Wi' nae vain boasts, nor vain regrets tormented,
We'll e'en jog on the gate, quiet and contented.

Although Mrs. Hamilton never lost her relish for works of humour and imagination, she had, during the last six years of her life, a decided preference for compositions of a higher order. Dugald Stewart, Paley, and Allison, had long been the chosen companions of her private hours; and her religion being, as her friend has justly observed, not only *spiritual* but practical, she became every day more deeply impressed with the value of useful knowledge, and more anxious to promote such pursuits as might be permanently beneficial to mankind.

Actuated by these motives, she, in 1815,

published a small volume, intituled *Hints*, addressed to the Patrons and Directors of *Public Schools;* recommending a partial adoption of the plan introduced in Switzerland by Pestalozzi. *

* The object of this little tract is thus briefly explained by its author: — " It is long since the fame of Pestalozzi first attracted the attention of British travellers towards the school in Switzerland, to which he has given celebrity; but of those cursory visitors, — though all saw with astonishment the effects produced by his mode of communicating the knowledge of geometry to little children, who, on the strictest examination, were found thoroughly and completely to comprehend the nature of the science, and the meaning of all they had been taught, — few thought of enquiring, whether the principle upon which Pestalozzi had proceeded, might not be capable of more extensive application. Upon farther investigation, it however appears, that the principle adopted and adhered to by Pestalozzi is in its value universal, and may be universally applied. It is neither deep nor intricate, nor beyond the comprehension of the most ordinary capacity. In few words, it is simply attending to the laws of nature. Pestalozzi perceived, that when one idea upon any subject had been acquired by a child, the idea next in succession was no sooner presented than imbibed; and also observing, that when it was attempted to force upon children ideas having no connection with any that pre-

This little work contains many pertinent remarks on the management of public institutions, all dictated by that sound good sense which (as Miss Edgeworth happily

---

viously entered their minds, the attempt proved fruitless, he took the hint from nature, and wisely formed his plan in conformity to her's. Instead of making children repeat words that suggested ideas to his own mind, he set himself to observe what were the ideas that actually existed in their's. He then, by questions adapted to their capacity, induced them to make such further use of their powers as enabled them to add new ideas to their slender stock; and, by persevering in the process, expanded their faculties to a degree which, to those best qualified to judge of the abstruse science he professed to teach, seemed little short of miraculous. Pestalozzi dismissed from his service all the excitements of punishment and reward. The habits of the Swiss peasantry doubtless contributed to the success of the experiment; as it cannot be supposed that the children of those simple villagers stood equally in need of strong excitement, as children who, from their situation, are compelled to associate with depravity in an overgrown metropolis. The means employed by Pestalozzi to improve the heart and dispositions, as they have been described to me by those who have made enquiries upon the spot, seem to be extremely simple and extremely obvious. Other children are taught to say that God is ever present; but the pupils of Pestalozzi

observes) " so eminently characterised Mrs. Hamilton's writings."

" The *Modern Philosophers*," continues that enlightened encomiast, " the *Cottagers of Glenburnie*, and the *Letters of the Hindoo Rajah*, the first book, we believe, that our author published, have all been highly and steadily approved by the public. These works, alike in principle and in benevolence of design, but with each a different grace of style and invention, have established Mrs. Hamilton's character as an original, agreeable, and successful writer of fiction; but her claims to literary reputation as a philosophic, moral, and religious author, are of a higher sort, and rest upon works of a more solid and durable nature — upon her works on education, especially her

---

are taught to know, and to feel in their hearts, that in God they live, and move, and have their being." *

* Annexed to the *Hints* is a separate volume on Questions, exhibiting the plan of instruction to be adopted by the teacher. This tract is sold separately from the other, and was printed for the author.

Letters on Female Education. In those she not only shows that she has studied the history of the human mind, and that she has made herself acquainted with all that has been written on this subject by the best moral and metaphysical writers, but she adds new value to their knowledge, by rendering it practically useful. She has thrown open, to all classes of readers, those metaphysical discoveries or observations which had been confined chiefly to the learned. To a sort of knowledge which had been considered rather as a matter of curiosity than of use, she has given real value and actual currency. She has shown how the knowledge of metaphysics can be made serviceable to the art of education. She has shown, for instance, how the doctrine of the association of ideas may be applied in early education to the formation of the habits of temper, and of the principles of taste and of morals: she has considered how all that metaphysicians know

of sensation and abstraction can be applied to the cultivation of the attention, the judgment, and the imagination of children. No matter how little is actually ascertained on these subjects: she has done much in awakening the attention of parents, of mothers especially, to future enquiry: she has done much by directing their enquiries rightly — much by exciting them to reflect upon their own minds, and to observe what passes in the minds of their children: she has opened a new field of investigation to women — a field fitted to their domestic habits, — to their duties as mothers, and to their business as preceptors of youth, to whom it belongs to give the minds of children those first impressions and ideas which remain the longest, and which influence them often the most powerfully through the whole course of life. In recommending to her own sex the study of metaphysics, as far as it relates to education, Mrs. Hamilton has been judiciously

careful to avoid all that can lead to that species of vain debate of which there is no end: she, knowing the limits of the human understanding, does not attempt to go beyond them, into that which can be at best but a dispute about terms. She does not aim at making women expert in the wordy war; nor does she teach them to astonish the unlearned by their acquaintance with the various vocabulary of metaphysical system-makers: such jugglers' tricks she despised; but she has not, on the other hand, been deceived, or overawed, by those who would represent the study of the human mind as one that tends to no practical purpose, and that is unfit and unsafe for her sex. Had Mrs. Hamilton set ladies on metaphysics merely to show their *paces*, she would have made herself and them ridiculous and troublesome; but she has shown how they may, by slow and certain steps, advance to a useful object. The dark, intricate, and dangerous labyrinth, she has

converted into a clear, strait, practicable road — a road not only practicable but pleasant, and not only pleasant, but, what is of far more consequence to women, safe.

" Mrs. Elibabeth Hamilton is well known to be not only a moral but a pious writer; and in all her writings, as in all her conversation, religion appears in the most engaging point of view. Her religion was sincere, cheerful, and tolerant, joining in the happiest manner Faith, Hope, and Charity. All who had the happiness to know this amiable woman will, with one accord, bear testimony to the truth of that feeling of affection which her benevolence, kindness, and cheerfulness of temper inspired. She thought so little of herself, so much of others, that it was impossible she could, superior as she was, excite envy: she put every body at ease in her company, in good humour and good spirits with themselves. So far from being a restraint on the young and lively, she encouraged by her sympathy

their openness and gaiety. She never flattered; but she always formed the most favourable opinion that truth and good sense would permit, of every individual who came near her. Instead, therefore, of fearing and shunning her penetration, all loved and courted her society."*

Such is the testimony of a female author, who, if not an intimate, was a sincere and cordial friend, and who, in offering this honourable tribute to the memory of her country-woman, has unconsciously suggested to other minds the appropriate eulogium on a character, in which it is impossible not to trace congenial sentiments and kindred virtues.

The tract on Pestalozzi, published in 1815, was the last work Mrs. Hamilton

* This amiable tribute to contemporary merit appeared in an Irish paper, soon after the death of Mrs. Hamilton.

finished. A series of afflictive events rendered this the most calamitous year she had experienced since the death of her lamented brother. In a short space of time many of the dearest hopes she had long cherished were annihilated; and on her affectionate nature was imposed the cruel necessity of participating in sorrows for which she could offer no alleviation. Her private journal contains an interesting allusion to those tender privations, some of which, by wounding her, (where she was most vulnerable,) in the happiness of those she loved, could not but cast a permanent gloom over her future existence.

In speaking of her departed friends, she observes: — "Of those I have known most intimately, no two bore the slightest resemblance to each other in character and disposition. How different were their views of happiness; how different their opinions upon almost every subject; how different

their tastes, their likings, and aversions! But all believed in the same God, and died in the same faith. Upon reflection, I find that I can, in many instances, trace the mental peculiarities of individuals to circumstances over which they had no control; — such as education, society, prosperity, adversity. Whatever state of mind these circumstances tend to produce, will, by the frequent recurrence of them, become habitual; and when thus habitual, all new ideas will be rejected that do not accord or correspond with it. Hence the great variety of opinions among persons of equal intellect. By the proper use of reason, in analysing our own opinions, and candidly examining the opinions of others, this evil might be corrected; but, alas! the passions born of corruption, the pride inherent in our nature, present an obstacle which is too often insuperable. Never can reason become pure and perfect, until corruption has put on incorruption; never can the

mental habits, which are formed by circumstances in this mortal life, be completely reformed, till this mortal have put on immortality. Of the light that may then at once burst on the human soul, we can form no adequate idea: by that light, those who now glory in their wisdom will be enlightened to perceive the errors in which they were so long involved, — the intellect now obscured by ignorance, or perverted by prejudice, shall rise to the full enjoyment of those mental powers, which in this mortal state were held inthralled. Though exempted from actual suffering, the sorrows of others have penetrated my soul. May all that I have experienced from heartfelt sympathy, produce in me its proper effects! and do thou, oh my God, dispense consolation to the sorrowful, that the bonds which have been dissolved on earth may be more firmly united in the regions of eternal joy!"

Various domestic circumstances conspired with the melancholy state of her health to determine Mrs. Hamilton to fix her residence in England, where she had valued relatives, and inestimable friends, some of them endeared beyond expression by the recent touch of affliction. Having taken this resolution, in which her affectionate sister heartily concurred, she made arrangements for quitting the *comfortable* home at Edinburgh, so long endeared by the pleasures of society and the recollections of friendship. The beginning of May was the time fixed for their departure. It was their intention to pass some time at Bath; and it appeared not improbable, that they might be induced to fix their residence in its vicinity. But some months previous to that period, Mrs. Hamilton was attacked with an inflammation in her eyes, (to which she had long been subject,) attended with exquisite suffering, and causing the most afflictive privations. Confined to an apart-

ment from which light was carefully excluded, incapable of attending to books, or even of listening to the conversation that used to inspire delight, her spirits began to languish, her appetite failed, her strength declined, and a new and alarming depression took possession of that mind, which had ever before preserved its elasticity and animation. The preparations for the removal were not, however, suspended; for from change alone had she, or her friends, any hope of amendment. On the 13th of May she made a melancholy transition from her apartment to the carriage which was to convey her for ever from the scene to which she had been so long attached.

Proceeding by easy stages, she at first seemed to derive benefit from the change; and her sister began to indulge the hope, that the remedy would not be less effectual than it had proved on former occasions. She was, however, alarmed by appearances

of weakness greater than had hitherto been observed; and before their arrival at Harrowgate, which was to be their resting place, her heart suggested the most gloomy forebodings. After two or three unsuccessful trials of the Harrowgate spa, Mrs. Hamilton, with her usual promptitude of decision, pronounced her malady mortal; and having adjusted all her worldly concerns, prepared, without a murmur, for approaching dissolution. During some weeks she lingered, perfectly sensible to the progress of decay. The piety she had so long cherished did not desert her in these awful moments: the few words she articulated were expressive of resignation to the divine will, of affection for her surviving friends, of aspirations for happiness and immortality. The torpor that was stealing over her mental faculties, had no power to reach her heart: "Give my love, ten times told," was the last message she dictated to that incomparable bosom friend so often

mentioned in these memoirs. The last moments of existence were exempted from severe suffering: she sunk into a slumber that prefigured death, and finally, without a struggle, breathed her last on the 23d of July, 1816, having nearly entered her 60th year.

Her remains were interred in the church at Harrowgate, where a simple monument, with a suitable inscription, has been erected to her memory, as a last offering of affection from her devoted sister.

Little can be necessary to illustrate a character which it has been the business of these pages to develope to the reader. Let it be reserved for Mr. Mac Neill, the amiable bard of Stirling, to offer a last tribute to the departed friend, whom he had known and admired from her earliest youth, when she read and wrote by stealth, and from superficial observers at-

tracted notice only by the animation of her countenance and the exuberance of her spirits. During many succeeding years, he watched the formation of her character, and witnessed its progressive developement, whilst, devoted to her venerable uncle and to domestic duties, she checked the lofty aspirations of a superior mind, submitted without murmur to live in solitude and seclusion, and created for herself that happiness which was not to be found in a situation equally uncongenial to her talents and feelings. At a more auspicious period, it was the privilege of this faithful friend to introduce her to the beloved family by whose sympathy and kindness she was soothed in affliction, and gradually recalled to exertion and enjoyment. It had been his pride to hail her first success; when she rapidly emerged from obscurity to distinction, he generously exulted in the well-earned triumph; and to the latest period of her life, continued to enjoy those privileges of

intimacy, which are founded on the basis of esteem and confidence. To Mrs. Hamilton, every succeeding year enhanced the value of a friend, — one amongst the few survivors to whom the protectors of her childhood had been known and beloved, — a friend, not more endeared by the memory of her happy youth, than by recollections of sorrow in which he had sympathised, — recollections which, when mellowed by time and distance, produce a source of mental satisfaction far superior to ordinary gratification or vulgar enjoyment. The testimony of such a friend may be considered as a register of time and truth; and the following passage is at once a requiem to the living and the dead, whose memory it sanctifies by an eternal valediction.

" In all my intercourse with the world,
" I never knew one with a finer mind, a
" warmer heart, a clearer head, or a sound-
" er understanding; and, perhaps, were

" we to particularise the most prominent
" feature in Mrs. Hamilton's intellectual
" character, we might select the two last
" mentioned as the most remarkable. Such
" was the clearness of her conceptions, and
" such the quickness of her discrimination,
" that she seldom or never hesitated a
" moment to give her opinion decidedly on
" any subject introduced, — and what is
" equally remarkable, seldom or never were
" her opinions erroneous. Such is the re-
" sult of my observations on one I knew
" above forty years, during which she
" continued to rise in my estimation. In
" her death, I have sustained a loss which
" I have reason to think I never can repair:
" but while my heart bleeds at the thought,
" it ceases not to glow at the remembrance
" of her virtues."*

* This passage is extracted from a letter, with which the writer of these pages was favoured by Mr. Mac Neill, who did not live to witness its publication. The following brief but spirited sketch of his character is from the pen of a friend to whom he had been long

and intimately known, and who has in a manner embodied the sentiments of his numerous friends and acquaintance: — "This pleasing poet, and very estimable man, did not long survive the friend he so much "honoured; he died in Edinburgh, in March 1818, "at the age of 70, after suffering much from ill health, "and disappointment in his early prospects. These "misfortunes had given an expression of melancholy "to his views of life, without lessening his benevolence. "His heart was affectionate, and his imagination always "lively and susceptible. His exquisite ballad on the "Waes o' War, will continue to rank among the best "legendary tales of Scotland; and many of his songs "are remarkable for simplicity and pathos: he was a "lover of truth and nature, a sensitive, an upright, "and an honourable man."

SELECTIONS

FROM THE

PRIVATE JOURNAL.

SELECTIONS

FROM THE

PRIVATE JOURNAL,*

MENTIONED IN THE MEMOIRS.

London, Dec. 18th, 1789.

How weak! how vain! and futile! are the best resolutions of the human mind! Convinced of the utility of such a mental register as might serve to recall to my memory the different impressions made upon my soul, by the various events of human life; and by recording its most serious and deep reflections, and pious resolutions, might stimulate my mind to an advancement in religion and virtue; — I began this

* These, and the other posthumous MSS., were submitted for revision and selection to a literary friend of the late author.

book with a resolution to keep it faithfully, and recur to it frequently. But notwithstanding the sincerity of these resolves, a whole year has elapsed since I have made any progress in it. Let me then recall the events of that year to my memory. It commenced to me under the circumstances of bodily weakness, arising from long indisposition. But with these it was permitted me to enjoy many blessings for which I hope my heart was truly thankful; and when at length, by slow degrees, health was once more completely restored to me, with what deep gratitude did I receive the mighty blessing! To *it* many others were added — the company of my dearest brother and sister — the intellectual pleasures of conversation — the amusements of fancy in novelty and variety — little care to distract my mind, and little pain to distress my body. These blessings have been mine: but what has been my improvement of them? In the absence of real evils, have

not trifles too frequently discomposed my mind? With so much time at my own disposal, how little have I appropriated to the duties of devotion? How far have I fallen short of that rule of life which in the hours of serious meditation I had prescribed to myself?

Ingram's Crook, 1791.

The consideration of whether I have been right or wrong in continuing to communicate with the church of England, which, during my residence in London, I was, from a variety of circumstances, led to attend, has now employed my thoughts; and, after the maturest deliberation, I think I perceive that all the objections to my doing so are merely worldly, and respect only what the opinions of my acquaintances here may be, or what they are apt to consider as a change of religion; but which I consider as no such change. My religion I know to be the same. The mode of worship, or the form in which my public

prayers are offered up to God, I know to be a matter of indifference as to the *mere form*, so that they be *really* offered up "in spirit and in truth." As the form prescribed by both churches is of *human* authority, so far it must partake of human imperfection. That of the church of England leaves less room for the warmth of ardour in devotion, which frequently awakes the heart, and calls forth all the powers of the soul, but which may be employed by ignorance and fanaticism in such a way as to offend rational piety and disgust common sense. Perhaps I have been too easily disgusted in this way; perhaps the appearance of irreverence with which I thought Mr. —— addressed the Deity might have become less perceptible to my mind by the power of custom; and perhaps his discourses might have become more edifying if I had attended them longer, and given time to prejudice to subside. But while I had the opportunity of attending so sensible a preacher as Mr. G.,

and am convinced in my conscience that both the mediums of devotion are equally acceptable to the Almighty object of it, I surely cannot have done wrong in preferring what I thought most rational, and most agreeable to my own mind. But as the mind, the "heart itself is deceitful," let me take care to ascertain that no unspiritual motive, no lurking hope of greater laxity in spirit, or in practice, may have been at the bottom of this resolution; and for this end, let me resolve to be doubly diligent in the performance of my religious duties, reading, meditation, and prayer; and to be very careful that neither my public nor private devotions should ever degenerate into *mere form*, but that in both I may ever remember the words of my blessed Saviour to the woman at the well, who seems to have had the same opinion that prevails so much in the world to this day, that religion consists, and will be respected of God, according to the church to

which one belongs; but which our blessed Saviour reproved in these words, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither on *this mountain*, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true *worshippers* shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; *for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*" And such a worshipper, my God, may I ever be!

Hadleigh, July, 1792.

Every change of situation calls for a renewal of these exercises, — for meditations upon the past, or reflections on the present, and preparations for the future. When I look back to this time in the last year, and consider how I was then busied in preparing the Crook for a place of continued residence, struggling to reconcile myself to its solitude, and anxious to bring my mind to conformity with a situation which I vainly expected to be permanent,

I have a striking view of the ignorance and folly of human nature. Let me be humbled under a sense of it in myself; and let what I have already experienced of my own blindness with regard to future events, prevent my mind from an over-anxious solicitude for those to come! I believe in the over-ruling providence of the Most High; I have committed myself without reserve to Him; I have earnestly sought his direction; and if, as He who is Truth has informed me, "a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without the knowledge of our Heavenly Father," I cannot believe but that it is He, even the Almighty Disposer of events, that has conducted me to this place. That belief puts a stop to all regret, and silences every murmur. It now only remains for me to walk worthy of that vocation to which I am called. Let me do so in the very manner in which the Apostle, whose words I have now been reading, mentions, "with all lowliness and meekness, with

long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." And, Oh, Thou who art the God of Peace, and of Love, incline my heart to peace, gentleness, forgiveness, and charity. Amen.

Bowness, August 15th, 1802.

The superiority of the Scriptures to every composition of human genius, must appear incontestible to those who persevere in making those Scriptures their daily study. By such strict and repeated examination of any other work, how many errors and incongruities should we discover? Of all who have written for three thousand years, there are but three or four whose works can bear a frequent perusal: and upon examining the merits of these works, which have stood the test of ages, we shall find, that they owe their popularity to the lively conception and just delineation of the passions and affections of the human heart, as

they operate in the formation of character. To this may be added, the description of natural objects, and the judicious use of that imagery and those allusions which have a powerful influence upon such associations as produce the emotions of sublimity and beauty. Is it not strange, that so few should have been found capable of all this? Is it not still stranger, that in a nation where literature never flourished, all the writers whose works have been preserved to us, should seem eminently possessed of those qualities which constitute the highest merit of the great poets alluded to?

Sunday, January 17th, 1808.

In studying the prophets, with a view of particularly examining the witness they bear to the Messiah, many things have occurred to me which it would have been useful to preserve. I already feel that memory is unfaithful; and with regard to much that I thought it impossible to for-

get, would now be applied to in vain. The general impression is all that I can now record. The power of foretelling future events, is, in reality, in nothing more wonderful than the power of recalling to the mind those that are past. Had it been as generally useful to our present state of existence, it would doubtless have been as generally bestowed. By endowing his prophets with the gift of prescience, the Almighty has given an earnest to man of the enlargement of his faculties in a future state; where, it is probable, the knowledge of the events that are to come may constitute one of the sources of eternal happiness. That the prophets did enjoy this gift of prescience, appears to me not solely to rest on the historical evidence we have of the fulfilment of their prophecies (though this affords ample testimony of their divine inspiration): no one can carefully peruse them, and not perceive, in all of them, something more or less that can no other-

wise be accounted for than on the supposition of their being delivered under the influence of a supernatural impression. Their constant reference to the Great Deliverer, under one or other of his appropriate characters of Prophet, Priest, or King of the Israel of God, though sometimes obscured by the images of worldly grandeur, which are used as figures to represent the ideas of a power, influence, and authority, purely spiritual, are still intermixed with circumstances which never could be applicable to any worldly potentate. The promises made to the Jews were all of a temporal nature. The prophets who were Jews, could not, without divine inspiration, devise promises that were in their nature spiritual. Yet they, in giving the promise of the future Lawgiver, speak of his reign as the reign of righteousness and peace. They foretell the effects of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, as his peculiar gift; and while they draw the

most lively picture of the then deplorable state of the public morals, and pronounce with precision the determined punishment, and the period of its duration, they look forward beyond the restoration of their kings and of their worship, to an event which should open a new era in the administration of the Divine government, when the law of grace should be promulgated, not to the Jews alone, but to all the nations upon earth, guarded by penalties, and sanctioned by rewards peculiarly its own. In this they all accord. Their testimony in bearing witness to the future is given in the same spirit, and seems evidently to have proceeded from the same source. Yet how differently were the minds of those men endowed! They are as witnesses called from the different ranks of life to give their evidence to some past transaction of which all had an equal knowledge. In such a case each would deliver his testimony in the language in which he had been accus-

tomed to express himself, and elucidate it by the images that were most familiar to his mind: for though memory represented the circumstances that had taken place with equal faithfulness to each, it must with each have been attached to his own particular train of associations. Thus, likewise, the gift of prescience acted in the minds of the several prophets. But thus it would never have been represented as acting, had the prophecies been the forgeries of another age. Another test of the truth of the prophets is in the spirit of their morals. The prophets were all of them zealous adherents of the law of Moses. Now there appears to be in human nature a wonderful tendency to exalt all that peculiarly distinguishes the sect or religion to which the individual is attached, above all comparison with others. The ceremonies of the Mosaical dispensation were calculated to gratify and increase that natural propensity. Yet the prophets uniformly proclaim the wrath of God as

denounced, not against the mere breakers of the ceremonial law, but against the workers of iniquity. They uniformly represent benevolence, charity, and the other virtues, as the means of recommending to the favour of God. They proclaim his returning favour to the penitent who shows his penitence, not by the rites of sacrifice and the costly offerings which the law had instituted, but by works of piety and mercy. This was the work of inspiration. It never would have been thus, that human pride, under the guise of superior sanctity, would have taught the people.

On returning from Stirlingshire.

Edinburgh, July 25th, 1803.

Again has another birth-day arrived: another year of health and happiness has been added to my existence: a period of almost uninterrupted enjoyment; for few have been the clouds that have obscured

it. It has, I hope, been a period not only of peace but of improvement. Much of it has been spent in the society of superior minds; I have conversed with many of the most distinguished characters of the age; I have listened to the opinions of the enlightened, and been instructed by the conversation of the good and wise. The enjoyment of such society has been the happiness to which I have, from my early years, looked up as the first and greatest that this world could afford. When I indulged in the dreams of imagination, fancy never drew a picture of felicity in which an introduction to this society was not the first object. By fortune alone I thought it possible to attain it; but, without that passport, I have seen all my wishes accomplished, and accomplished in a way infinitely more gratifying, as it has been attended with the consciousness of being thought worthy of the esteem of those whose virtues and talents I so much admired. Let me

now examine the effect that this has produced upon my mind. Has it brought forth fruits of gratitude? Has it been improved as it ought, in cultivating the seeds of wisdom and benevolence? The day of account is approaching: another year is added to my life, and the shadows of evening are already lengthened, so as to remind me of the setting sun.

January 1st, 1808.

Another year has finished its course — another stage of my journey is completed. How pleasant to me, in all respects, has been the past! Happy were the days of my youth, spent in the bosom of peace and innocence; my spirits elate with hope, and my mind unclouded by any feeling of care or sorrow, I was then not insensible to the blessings of my lot: ardent were the prayers of gratitude that I offered up to heaven at the close of every day, when I besought of God to prolong the life of the

dear friend on whose life I thought my happiness depended. Yet, in the midst of that happiness, how many vague wishes would arise! I longed for communication with that world which imagination painted so fair and so desirable. Vanity assured me that I should there be gratified by receiving that homage which I believed to be invariably given to superior talents and virtues. The love and esteem of my friends and companions did not satisfy my soul: I wished to know, and to be known, as fully by those whose esteem would confer a higher honour, and be more gratifying to my ambition. Thus these days of most perfect happiness were often consumed in forming visions of the future, even where my mind had no particular object of pursuit: but when my sensibility was awakened, and my affections called forth, how was my mind agitated by hopes and fears, and perplexities and sorrows, which, ideal as they were, destroyed all feeling of present en-

joyment! In what a different state has the last year of my life been passed! How calm, how unclouded, how serene! The sense of happiness has been as strong as in the happiest days of youth; my gratitude to God has been as ardent. But the object of pursuit is no longer vague and undefined. It looks beyond this world to the enjoyment of the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. All the blessings of my life I consider as his gift; and thankfully acknowledge them. But still, on looking back, I feel that I have not done enough to show my gratitude. I would anxiously wish to do more in time to come. This year, O God, I humbly devote to thee, and to thy service! O in thy mercy grant that it may be marked by an increase in every Christian virtue, and in all good works; that if it should please thee to take me to thyself before the return of another year, this year, even this very year, may be the commencement of a state of future glory! If it be

thy will that I am to spend it on earth, continue to me the peace in which it has begun. Bless the friends who have endeared me to the past. May we continue to be mutual blessings to each other, and have our hearts raised to thee in praise and thanksgiving!

Sunday, February 21st, 1808.

Were I to indulge myself in condemning others with asperity for their opinions, I certainly should deserve to be condemned: for, in the course of my life, how often have my own opinions varied, according to the new lights that were thrown upon certain objects of my contemplation. Let the consciousness of this soften the severity of my judgments. Let me remember, that though I now see, in all the prophets, the most valuable testimony to the truth of the Christian faith, a few years only have elapsed since I considered that evidence to be so dark and unintelligible as to be of

little avail to the defence of the Christian cause. The few works upon the prophecies which had fallen into my hands contributed to this opinion, as the writers of them appeared to me in the light of pious visionaries, all labouring to establish some favourite point; or by twisting and turning the obscure meaning of dark passages to suit their purpose, to penetrate into the events of futurity. These obscure passages, by becoming subject of controversy, are most frequently spoken of, and most generally known; and hence by people who turn with disgust from the reveries of commentators, the prophecies being supposed to be all equally ambiguous, are entirely laid aside. To me it now appears, and I here record the present opinion, that at the commencement of the Messiah's reign, the ancient prophecies were sealed. That a new order of things was then established; and that, from that period, events merely temporal, became so comparatively insigni-

ficant, as to be no longer worthy of a Divine revelation. The kingdom of our Saviour was not of this world; nor did He promise to his followers any peculiar favour in the distribution of worldly enjoyments. He, in direct terms, warns them that the very reverse would, in many instances, take place; and showing that it is the certain tendency of riches and honours to corrupt the heart, pronounces an emphatic blessing on the poor, the despised, and the persecuted. The kingdom of our Saviour was, in the next place, to be universal: it was to consist of all people, tongues, nations, and languages, "from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof;" that is, evidently of individuals who should, in all countries where the Gospel was preached, acknowledge the Son of God as their spiritual sovereign, and become subject to his authority. With this kingdom of our Saviour, the rise and fall of empires, their political changes and commotions, have certainly no

concern; nor is throughout the Gospel the favour of God promised to any nation, in its national capacity, but in *every nation*, he that worketh righteousness is said to be accepted. Beneath the most wicked of the emperors, the spiritual kingdom commenced and flourished: yet on these emperors who were its most inveterate enemies, no special doom was pronounced. Nor did the downfall of the Roman empire, though a greater event than the overthrow of the Babylonish monarchy, become the subject of any particular prophecy. Why? Because, from the period that the immortality of the soul was testified by our Saviour's death and resurrection, it was only such events as materially concerned the fate of the immortal spirit that became objects of any importance. From that era, the kings and governors of the world were only deemed great or glorious in proportion to their zeal in the discharge of the duties assigned their station; and for their good or bad actions,

they were to answer at the same tribunal at which their subjects were appointed to appear: for though the Divine government remained the same, and the general laws of Providence underwent no alteration, they were, for special purposes, henceforth to be presented under a different aspect. To the Jews, national prosperity, and national chastisement, were held forth as an incentive to the preservation of that national faith and national worship, which was to answer certain avowed purposes; while at the same time it was explicitly declared, that when these purposes were answered, the wall of separation should be thrown down; and the kingdom to be then established should be universal. To the Christians, national prosperity, or national chastisement, was never promised; for each Christian, who keeps the faith, is a member of that kingdom which is to flourish everlastingly. Why then should we, in direct opposition to this, still continue to

make use of a language, which is no longer applicable? What is the house of Brunswick, or of Buonaparte? What are the kingdoms of France, or of England, taken collectively? Can they, in that character, enter into the Divine inheritance? Or is there in the Gospel a single word that can give hope to any individual belonging to either nation, or to either family, that they shall, on that account, be deemed worthy of the kingdom of God? The same observation applies to every sect, and to every party. Yet we encourage ourselves in hating nations and families, and sects and parties, though the spirit of hatred is expressly prohibited to us; and though there may be in the nation sects, parties, and families we are inflamed against, many individuals who shall stand higher in the kingdom of heaven than ourselves. Is not this one of the delusions of pride? one of the proofs of that corruption, as it is in the cant phrase termed, which eagerly seizes

every opportunity of obtaining a sanction for the exercise of the vindictive passions? Nor can any public good accrue from it, but the very reverse: for if every individual throughout the nation, was to make the kingdom of heaven the chief object of his care, the nation must soon become so wise and virtuous as to be impregnable; for every individual would then perform the duty of the station assigned him, without any intermixture of base and sordid motives; it is this base intermixture of worldly motives, that makes us, in all political questions, seek to inflame the passions, rather than awaken the conscience. Having seen the evil of this, let me endeavour to avoid it; and neither awaken my own pride, nor the pride of others, by either espousing or opposing any collective body of individuals, nor ever, for fear of giving offence, avoid declaring my firm adherence to the principles of truth and justice, independently of favour or affection to sect or party.

Monday.

Before it fades in my memory, I wish to retrace, for future use, the impressions which Mr. Alison's most excellent sermon yesterday made upon my mind. The parable of the talents was one of the first passages in the New Testament that attracted my serious attention. I remember with gratitude the good old lady, who, on my showing what she thought an extraordinary proof of intellect, for my time of life, wisely endeavoured to make me sensible that every species of talent was a gift, for which I was to be strictly accountable. The impression that her discourse made upon my ardent mind was too powerful to be easily effaced: I hope it has never ceased, in some degree, to operate. By the discourse of yesterday those impressions were renewed in the most forcible manner; and such an accession of new light thrown upon the subject, as, I hope, will long continue to illuminate my mind. How admirably did

he explain the darkness that sat upon the ideas of immortality entertained by the ancient heathens, who, though they considered it as a state of retribution — of happiness to the just and misery to the wicked, — could not form to themselves any notions upon the subject that were not mixed with absurdity. By the gospel of Christ alone was it brought *to light!* The nature of the talents bestowed was next considered. Of these, the mental powers, and the capability of exciting them, claimed our first attention. The inefficacy of genius, without steadiness of pursuit, was pourtrayed in the most lively colours: and the advantages of a steady perseverance in virtue enforced with the most impressive eloquence. The words of the text, "Well, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a *very little*, have thou authority over ten cities," called forth observations that were equally new and striking. The talents which are the boast and admiration of mor-

tals, — talents of the *first class*, — are, in comparison of those enjoyed in a more perfect state, called a *very little*. What a lesson for pride! what a check on vanity and presumption! Yet the proper use of these talents in this imperfect state has the promise of a most glorious reward. The means of exerting them may not be great; but if they are exerted we shall be acceptable.

I am well convinced that they must ever be content with a very narrow and superficial knowledge of human character, who do not study it at the seasons when it is to be seen in undress; or rather in the nakedness in which it sometimes appears in the domestic scene. The men who boast a knowledge of the world, know mankind only as they appear in one or two particular habits, and these assumed ones. They, therefore, do not seem to be aware of that infinite variety which in reality exists; nor

do they enter into the minute circumstances by which that variety is formed. Women have more frequent opportunities for doing so than men have; but women seldom generalise: their attention is solely occupied with little particulars, from which they draw no general inferences; but where they are more capable, they have much in their power, as I am persuaded that a single week spent *tête-à-tête* with a person, in their own house, gives a more thorough insight into the mind and disposition than would in years be obtained in the common intercourse of society. On this clearer insight, we feel ourselves attracted or repulsed in exact proportion to the degree of genuineness we discover in the virtues that are the prime objects of our esteem and admiration. When, on these occasions, we find that what we had, on a distant view, admired as extraordinary merit, owed much of its effects to vanity; and that, where we imagined deep re-

flection and enlightened judgment to have been the sole dictators of the opinion we approved, they were, in reality, brought forth by pride and ostentation, it is impossible to be otherwise than repulsed: but may not our own pride add to this repulsion? It undoubtedly may; and therefore I would be on my guard against yielding to it: I would not cherish the sensibility that too easily takes offence at the vanity or ostentation of others, but regard them as imperfections that may adhere to what is excellent, without diminishing its intrinsic value. There is but one form in which they are insupportable; and that is when they lead to harsh and severe censure of the conduct or character of others. When persons, proud of their own virtues, and vain of their own attainments, compare others with themselves, in order to glory in their own superiority, I cannot help giving way to feelings of disgust: but do I not glory in finding myself, in this instance,

superior to them? I hope not; and the reason of my self-complacence is, that the consciousness of this superiority gives me no pleasure.

A Fragment on the Character of Miss Elizabeth Smith. *

May 15th, 1808.

The insight I have obtained into the peculiar construction of a mind that has long appeared to me a very extraordinary one, has afforded me a strong evidence of the truth of the opinions I had previously formed on the conformation of character. Miss Smith, extraordinary as she was, derived much of what rendered her superior from the circumstances in which she was placed. She indeed possessed from nature a strength of intellect that rarely falls to the lot of man or woman. This natural

* The lamented Author of the life of Klopstock, so well known by the beautiful delineation of her character from the pen of Mrs. H. Bowdler.

vigour was not cramped in childhood by ill-judged attempts to lead it into any particular direction. The care taken of her education was sufficient to assist the developement of her faculties, but not to force any of them prematurely; and just at the time the reasoning powers and the imagination had acquired sufficient strength she met with friends who directed them to the noblest objects. Had she at that momentous period been cast among inferior or uncultivated minds, how would her progress have been retarded! From how many sources of mental improvement would she have been cut off! Still worse would it have been for her had she then met with persons of genius, who had been misled by a false philosophy, which, by an appearance of what is generous and noble and lofty, dazzles and seduces the imagination. Had the friends to whose judgment she looked up been the disciples of Hume, Voltaire, or Rosseau — would she have had sufficient discernment to detect their sophistries? If her mind

had remained simple and free of vanity, I believe her intellect was strong enough for this, but whether her mind would under such tuition have retained this purity is questionable. By the principles she adopted, it was secured. In all the studies into which she entered, the idea of the Divine Being, from whom all truth and all knowledge is derived, so far predominated as to annihilate all the swellings of vanity, and in her own eyes to render her attainments as nothing. She studied the works of God as a revelation of his attributes of power and wisdom, given to the understanding through the medium of the senses; but this study only made her seek with greater energy for that further knowledge of God, which he in mercy has revealed through means more direct — through the chosen ones to whom he communicated the knowledge of his will, and of the nature and destination of man. To this study she applied with an ardour inspired solely by a conviction, that in the Scriptures a complete knowledge of the will

of God was to be found. She did not first make up her mind as to the particular doctrines she wished to find there, and then read with a view of strengthening her own preconceived opinions concerning them: but discharging from her mind all that she had been taught by man, she studied the Scriptures to be taught of God. It is thus that the Scriptures can only be studied to advantage, and in her the effects were seen. As her soul became more and more enlightened, her sense of duty became stronger, her resignation more devoted, her humility more pure, her piety more ardent, and her benevolence more diffused. But though her religion was seen in the whole tenor of her life, it was never displayed in zeal for the peculiar doctrines of any description of men; and thus she escaped that corruption which the pride necessarily attached to the defence of a party never fails to engender. All my opinions upon this subject are confirmed by this example. Though I cannot like her study the word of God in the ori-

ginal languages, I would like her study it in singleness of heart. Like her I consider it as the most important of all studies. I have long done so — but have its effects upon my mind been equally apparent? What I have most admired of these effects on her character, was in observing how far the sense of duty operated in opposition to the acquired habits and natural propensities of her mind. These led to perpetual abstraction. But duty rendered her alive to present objects and gave her activity and observation. Her intellectual powers had been from infancy more cultivated than her active powers. The only deficiency in her character was in the social affections. Yet so entirely did her principles overcome this deficiency with regard to all essentials, that she was kind, friendly, beneficent and charitable, ready to make the greatest sacrifices for the good of others, without taking any credit to herself for the sacrifices she made.

1809.

It is a beautiful part of the plan of Providence, that the farther we advance in life, the more strongly do we become impressed with the weakness of human reason. In early life we are so much elated by the first view of its extraordinary powers, that we set no bounds to them, and think that the human mind is equal to all things. As we advance in life, we perceive that many things are utterly beyond its grasp; and at length are convinced that it can attain to a perfect knowledge of almost nothing. By over-rating our own strength, we are, in the first instance, stimulated to exertion; by experience of its weakness, we are then led to look up to a higher power, and, instead of putting our confidence in man, (the thoughts of whose heart are vanity,) we turn to the fountain of truth, and, conscious of our own weakness, seek for strength from Him who is infinite in power and wisdom. May such be the

practical effects of the views I have lately been taking of the limited powers of the human mind, evinced by the opposite conclusions, made by persons of opposite prejudices, from the same facts and circumstances! Convinced of the frailty and imperfection of my nature, let me rest with confidence on no human being, far less on my own judgment, as if it alone were perfect. Alas! how often have I been in this way guilty! How apt am I to be very indignant, when I hear the opinions I have adopted controverted, or treated with contempt! Is not this because they are *my own*, and, as my own, are a part of that *ideal self* which is perpetually struggling for enlargement? Let me be humbled by a due sense of this great weakness.

Wilton Lodge, Aug. 27. 1809.

The evidences of the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of the great Creator, given by Paley in his Natural Theology, have attracted my attention to objects that

might otherwise have escaped my notice. I stand in no need of any additional argument to confirm my belief in the being and attributes of Almighty God: but I am, nevertheless, sensible of receiving much benefit from the deliberate and attentive view of the subject which I have been thus, as it were, accidentally led to take. The organization of plants and animals presents to our view such a series of wonders, that it is impossible to consider it, without being filled with astonishment and admiration: yet these things are every moment before us: we cannot open our eyes without beholding proofs of creative wisdom; we cannot draw a breath without experiencing the advantage we derive from it, in a frame so admirably constructed as, that while all its essential parts are so intimately connected that each depends on the other for existence, the main spring, which sets the whole in motion, is itself kept going by external aid — aid to which it has recourse twenty or thirty times every minute, night

and day, whether we sleep or wake! The air, on which the lungs are thus dependent, is not itself a simple element, but compounded of many distinct and separate gases, any one of which, breathed singly, would be fatal to life; but, by the divine will, they are mingled in such nice proportions, as adapts them to the purpose of sustaining the lives of all that live. This has not been noticed by Paley, but deserved his notice. Should any one of the different gases that compose the atmosphere be suffered to be withheld, or to become redundant, how instantly would the change be felt! Why are we not afraid of this calamity? Why, but because we never experienced, perhaps never heard of its having befallen any nation of the earth. God has, however, in some instances, permitted it to take place, in order to convince us of his power. He has limited the number of these instances, to convince us of his goodness; yet those who twenty times a

minute have the springs of life fed and sustained by the element which he has specially adapted to the purpose, take upon them to deny his power, and to question his goodness!! The wonderful provision made for the preservation of the various species of plants and animals, affords matter of just astonishment to the mind of man. For the minutest insect that crawls upon the minutest leaf, Providence has ordained an adequate supply of all that is requisite for the individual, and for the preservation of the species. In examining these, every discovery we make fills us with new wonder: but when we turn from these to the planetary system, behold the worlds that move around us, and endeavour to penetrate the order of their march, and to discover the laws by which these immense orbs are governed in their courses, we are lost and bewildered in the immensity of the vast idea, and find the capacity of our minds inadequate to its reception. The

strongest and most comprehensive of human minds cannot take the whole within its grasp. It must, therefore, be content with viewing it in detached parts; but even these, how astonishing are they! Is it after returning from this contemplation, that any one can dare to set limits to the power or goodness of the Almighty! and to say that, on the various forms of matter, the Divine Contriver has exhausted all his skill! Is, then, the mind of man so much less wonderful than his material part? Oh no! Thine, O Lord, is the air I breathe; — thine all that sustains the life I derived from thee; — thine also is the grace by which my soul is nourished and purified; — thine the hopes by which it is cherished and supported! Through Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer, thou hast provided for the continuance of that life, which thy mercy has bestowed on me. Through him accept of me, O Lord most high! and for his sake keep my soul from

swerving from that duty which I so justly owe to thee for all thy mercies! Amen.

Kenilworth, Oct. 25th, 1812.

Under the guidance and protection of Divine Providence, I have again visited England, in circumstances highly favourable to enjoyment. Considering every circumstance that is evidently calculated to improve and exercise the intellectual powers, and to increase the fund of knowledge and experience, as an addition to the talents for which we are to be accountable, the opportunities that have so frequently and unexpectedly been afforded me of enlarging my observation, lead to a variety of serious reflections. What has been first suggested on the present occasion, is naturally connected with the subject that has so long occupied the greatest share of my thoughts — the structure of the human mind. How admirable is that contrivance (if I may presume to use the term in

speaking of the works of Divine Wisdom) which has placed counteracting principles in opposition to each other, yet so as not to disturb the harmony of the whole; but, on the contrary, like the antagonist muscles in the human body, are alike necessary, and alike essential! It is thus that the force of habit and the love of change are set in opposition to each other; — both alike productive of happiness to the individual, alike essential to the well-being of society. The love of change, were it not thus counteracted by habit, would in many instances produce the extreme of misery; and were habit, on the other hand, to have no counteraction from the desire of change, individuals and nations would remain for ever stationary, rejecting all the wisdom to be purchased by experience, and denied all opportunities of observation. Both being thus necessary, it seems unwise to deliver ourselves to the dominion of either; and that we should endeavour to give to both

principles occasional exercise. When habit has rendered any particular mode of life or of manners agreeable to us, our sympathy is apt to be contracted within the same narrow bounds: where the desire of change has been indulged to excess, our sympathy has no time to operate, and is but rarely exercised. An occasional change of scene, and of society, and of modes of life, is in this point of view highly beneficial to the mind. It is now in my power to enjoy this benefit; and of importance that I should improve it; of importance, likewise, that my increased knowledge of human character should lead to an improvement of my own. The great variety that has been presented to my observation since I left home is infinitely beyond what those who have always been confined to one narrow circle could believe or comprehend. Yet all with whom I have conversed are in some respects formed on one model, and have received the laws of God as the rule of their lives

and opinions. So greatly, however, do they differ apparently from each other, as to afford a convincing proof, how much of what we call *character* depends on associations, originating in circumstances over which the will had no control. How ought this to increase the feelings of good-will, and to stifle the voice of censure!

Clifton, March 14th, 1813.

On looking back, through the long interval that has been suffered to pass without any record of sentiments and feelings, I find much reason to regret the supineness which has thus deprived me of the benefits resulting from such memoria. It has been a period of much enjoyment, to which returns of pain have only given occasional interruption. Even these sufferings, as they have been entirely confined to the body, ought to be considered in the light of blessings; since I have no doubt of their being salutary to my soul, and enhance

the value of those intervals in which I am permitted to enjoy an exemption from pain and fatigue, in a degree, which those who seldom suffer could not be made to comprehend. The pleasures of conversation are generally evanescent. It is only at special times that, by a rare concurrence of circumstances, persons are brought together whose minds by collision emit sparks, that at once warm the heart and enlighten the understanding. This singular happiness I have at different periods of my life enjoyed; and, brief as was the enjoyment, I consider it as the first of terrestrial blessings. The little tastes I have had of it, have never failed to lead my mind forward to that blessed community of saints, in whose society all the capacities of the soul, and all the affections of the heart, will, to full extent, be gratified. Here the pleasures of society, even in their purest state, are not altogether pure. The complacency arising from the conscious exertion of intel-

lect is, perhaps, seldom unmingled with pride or vanity; nor is the sympathy created by a correspondence of sentiment and taste entirely free from the alloy of the selfish principle. Such is the present condition of our nature, that even the purest pleasures abound with temptation. But though "it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those that love him," we may be assured, that where nothing unhallowed or impure shall enter, if sympathy forms an essential part of that happiness, (as we have every reason to suppose it will,) we must derive from its exercise a degree of pleasure infinitely superior to all we can in this imperfect state experience. It is, probably, from the dominion of the selfish principle, that good people have in every age been so apt to describe the state of the blessed, as a state of monotonous tranquillity; and that they have given to the character of the saints qualities with which they who describe them

can fully sympathise. But in doing so, we forget that infinite variety characterises the works of God; and that though the sympathy of which we are at present capable is, by the laws of our nature, limited and confined, it may in a more perfect state be rendered capable of a more unbounded operation; and be equally excited towards all "who are accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead," in whatever way their improved powers or faculties may be employed.

(*Her last Birth-Day.*)

July 25th, 1815. Bridge of Earn.

Again permitted to see a return of the day of my birth, let me offer to the Most High the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and renew the vows I have so often made — of devoting the remainder of my life to his service. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not any of the mighty

benefits which he has through life bestowed on thee. But how shall I number up blessings that are innumerable, — mercies that are beyond my comprehension great! From the first hour of my existence, how wonderfully have I been preserved! how mercifully provided for in things spiritual and temporal! In all events that have befallen me, from infancy to the present day, I perceive the wisdom and goodness of an over-ruling Providence, distributing sickness and health, joy and sorrow, as were to me most needful for correction or comfort; and in every instance alike salutary and beneficial. By the glorious light of the Gospel, the path to life eternal was early displayed to my view: to walk in it has been the serious purpose of my life. But, alas! how often have I been in danger of straying from it, turned aside by the passions and desires of my own corrupt heart! How often in such instances have I been recalled, as if by the voice of my Lord and Master,

in gentle accents, warning me of my danger! Though dark clouds have sometimes passed over me, never have they been permitted effectually to obscure the sun of truth. In the darkest hour I have still been enabled to say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Not by my own strength have I been preserved, nor by the exertion of my own intellect enlightened. It is by the grace of God that I have been saved from destruction; and to it alone that I look for aid in working out my salvation by faith and holiness of life. But in taking a view of the goodness and mercy that have conspicuously followed me through the whole course of my past life, I am inspired with confidence, and with the full assurance of hope, in regard to what remains. He, of whose love I have experienced such convincing proofs, will not forsake me when my strength fails. On him, then, let me cast my cares; and, firmly confiding in his wisdom and good-

ness, let me follow wherever his providence may lead; praying that he may so rule and govern the events before me, that if I change my place of residence, the change may be propitious to my eternal interests, — enabling me better to discharge the duties of declining life, and more fully to devote to God the sabbath of my days. One year more, and the period of six tens of years will be completed. One ten years more is the date of human life: so near, so very near do I now approach to that awful and eternal change, to which the few years spent on earth are but the prelude. But glory be to him, who hath divested the grave of its terrors; and in and through whom I have the hope of everlasting life, the promise of eternal joy!

ESSAYS.

ESSAYS.

THE LOUNGER.*

[No. 46.] Saturday, Dec. 17. 1785.

My readers will have observed that the office of the Lounger has of late been almost a sinecure, his correspondents having saved him the trouble of composition. The paper of to-day is also a communication, which, from the sex and accomplishments of the author, as well as the flattering manner in which she expresses herself, gratifies my vanity as much as my indolence.

* This essay was the first voluntary contribution of Miss Hamilton to the press.

To the AUTHOR *of the* LOUNGER.

SIR,

The genteel but pointed irony with which you mention the follies of our sex, and the pains you take, in your admired Essays, for our instruction and improvement, will, I make no doubt, have some influence on the minds of those who are thoughtless, but not dissipated; and who, though hurried down the stream of pleasure, are not yet enough hardened to disregard the admonitions of virtue.

Among young people of this description, many ladies may be led to the attainment of mental accomplishments, in hopes of recommending themselves to the notice of the other sex; who, from their superior education, and more solid judgment, would, one might presume, be more guided by the dictates of good sense, than led by the blind caprices of fashion. But, methinks, Sir, it would not be altogether fair to mis-

lead your inexperienced female readers with such fallacious hopes. Tell them as much as you please of the internal rewards that belong to virtue: that to embellish, in early life, their minds with taste, and to enlighten their understandings with some degree of knowledge, will prove to them an inexhaustible source of delight in the lonely hours of solitude, and procure veneration and respect to their declining years. But on the fine fellows who, in our days, deign to mingle in the female world, such accomplishments will have as much influence, as the harmonious compositions of Handel on the deaf pupils of Mr. *Braidwood.*

To be distinguished by your sex, is more or less the wish of every female heart. To solicit that distinction, fancy is put to the torture to dress out the votaries of fashion; and, to deserve it, the more judicious endeavour to adorn their minds with knowledge, taste, and sentiment. Which of

these most frequently attain their end, you, Sir, who frequent the circles of the great and gay, can be at no loss to determine.

As I was early taught to mark the characters, and make reflections on the events that passed before me in life, short as that life has been, and few and simple as have been its tranquil scenes, perhaps a sketch of it may not be altogether unworthy your perusal.

I am the daughter of a clergyman, whose virtues adorn humanity, and whose character in every respect does honour to his profession. A long attachment had subsisted between him and my mother, before the pride of her relations (who piqued themselves on their high descent) would consent to her being made happy for ever by an union with one whom those relations considered as her inferior: but the constancy of their affection at length subdued every obstacle; and their life has ever

since been one continued scene of domestic felicity. As I was their only child, my education was the prime object of their attention. To procure me the more elegant accomplishments, they appropriated the savings of their œconomy; while, with the tenderest solicitude, they themselves endeavoured to form my manners, to cultivate my understanding, and to cherish the virtues of my heart.

The friendly terms on which we lived with the patron of our parish, whose lady took a particular liking to me, gave me frequent opportunities of mixing with polite company. The natural gaiety of my temper, and steady sincerity of my heart, gained me the good-will of all my companions; with some of whom I early contracted the most tender friendship, — a friendship which has increased with our increasing years, and received strength from every incident of pain or pleasure that has befallen us in life.

By the gentlemen, I found myself almost invariably treated according to their ideas of my rank and consequence. Of all the numbers who came to Castle ——, excepting an old naval officer, many traits of whose character, though cast in somewhat of a rougher mould, bore a strong resemblance to that of your worthy friend Colonel Caustic, I do not remember to have met with one who thought it possible the daughter of a country parson could be as well informed upon any subject as the heiress of a Baronet; and after I have, by Lady ——'s desire, played on her forte piano, some of the finest concertos of Bach and Abel to an unlistening audience, I have heard the same gentlemen applaud with every mark of rapture the fashionable Miss Fanny Flirter rattling over some insipid fragment of a new opera tune.

At the earnest solicitation of a sister of my father's, married to a respectable mer-

chant in the capital, I one winter spent a few months with her in town. I had here a more ample opportunity of observing that universal passion for what is called *style* in life, than I had hitherto met with. The notice taken of me by our patroness Lady ——, who always passed the winter in the metropolis, and to whose parties, either at home or at public places, I had a general invitation, made me esteemed quite the *ton* by the set of men who visited my uncle. I was often distressed by their civilities, and put out of countenance by their eagerness to show me attention; while by the gentlemen in Her Ladyship's suite I was considered of no more importance than any other piece of furniture in the drawing-room: but, like yourself, Sir, though silent, I was not always idle; and, while unthought of, and unspoke to, made such remarks on the scene before me as I hope will be of service to me through life.

From Edinburgh, at the request of my mother's relations, I went to the county of ——. These great relations had taken no notice of her since her marriage, but now received me in the most cordial manner. I was immediately introduced by them to their acquaintances in a genteel and populous neighbourhood, and was every where received with the respect due to the ally, and what is more, the very probable heiress of an ancient and wealthy family. Wherever I appeared, I was loaded with caresses. A gentleman of the first distinction engaged me for his partner at an election-ball, which happened soon after my arrival in the country; and the attention paid me by him, and a few others of equal rank, soon brought me completely into fashion. I was now discovered to possess qualifications which no one before had ever thought of imputing to me. My former friends had indeed sometimes complimented me with the appellation of a lively, sensible-enough

sort of girl; but now, to all the charms of elegance in manner, I added those of the most brilliant wit; and though it was allowed I could not, strictly speaking, be termed handsome, yet my features spoke such animation, and my eyes beamed with so much sensibility, — that Beauty herself would have had but little chance beside me. Was it any wonder, that every latent spark of vanity in my heart should have been kindled, on thus finding myself a distinguished figure in a scene of higher life than any I had yet witnessed. I was, alas! but too soon intoxicated with the adulation I received; and with the most poignant regret I took leave of people, who I thought had discovered such just discernment of merit, although it was to return to the fond arms of my beloved parents.

The flattering scenes I left, had made too deep an impression to be easily erased. I found the amusements of my former life

had become insipid, its employments irksome and fatiguing: and as our great neighbours were now in London, I had little opportunity of diverting my chagrin by any change of company. It was even with difficulty I was prevailed on to accompany my most intimate friend to the county-assembly, as I knew I should there find myself in a very different situation to that in which I figured at the balls in ———. But what was my delight, on soon seeing enter the assembly-room, along with a family of the first rank, two of my most intimate acquaintances in that loved county! As both the gentlemen had *there* honoured me with their particular attention, my heart beat with rapture at the idea of what delight they must receive from this unexpected interview. But I soon found these gentlemen wisely considered that I now moved in a different sphere. They avoided seeming to observe me as long as possible; and when at length ob-

liged to do it, passed their compliments with a certain careless air; which may not improperly be styled a well-bred sort of incivility. A moment's reflection on this little striking incident restored me to my senses; and I returned home with the most cheerful alacrity, as to the certain asylum of happiness and tranquillity.

In a little time after I had thus recovered from the delirium of flattery and folly, our society received a considerable acquisition in our acquaintance with *Dorilas.* This gentleman, who had lately come to the country in pursuit of health and rural amusements, was first noticed by my father for his regular attendance at church; and, by the politeness of his manners, and solidity of his conversation, soon recommended himself to his particular regard. He appeared to be one of those favourites of nature, whom she endowed with her best gifts, a good understanding, and a benevo-

lent heart. His mind seemed enlightened by science, enlarged by a knowledge of the world, and, we were told, had been softened by the correcting hand of misfortune. He came frequently to the parsonage-house, to which he had at all times a general invitation; and where he was ever welcomed by the unaffected kindness of plain, but genuine hospitality. As Dorilas seemed to pique himself on his retirement from the more dissipated scenes of life, he always appeared pleased with our rural simplicity; but no sooner did Dorilas get intimately acquainted with the families of higher rank, and found himself established in a circle of greater *style*, than he omitted his visits at the parsonage-house, and even mentioned its inhabitants with that sort of contemptuous ridicule, which, though it may be a very fashionable *manière de parler*, gives a deeper wound to the feelings, than the envenomed sting of calumny can inflict.——We were all hurt at being thus disappointed in a

character of which we had formed so high an idea; and when on a visit to my friend at the county-town I accidentally met with Dorilas, I found it impossible to conceal the resentment with which his conduct had inspired me. But when I saw his surprise at the apparent coldness of my manner, I began to reflect, that should we be mistaken, or misinformed, I might, by my seeming caprice, have done an injury to feelings, perhaps no less delicately susceptible of it than my own. I therefore resolved to acquaint him with what we had heard, and frankly to tell him our opinion of his behaviour; but in the only opportunity that ever after offered, I was so embarrassed by the stately distance of his manner, and the difficulty of introducing the subject with becoming delicacy and spirit, that I found it impossible to fulfil my intention. The little conversation that passed only served him with a pretence to put an entire end to our acquaintance; and in six months after, Dorilas

set out on a gay party to the German Spa without deigning to enquire even for my father.

Such is the incense offered at the shrine of fashion! not only by the vain and giddy, but even by the sentimental and judicious! and such the attentions people who shine not in that brilliant sphere may expect to meet with in the world! But happy! thrice happy they! according to the wise maxims of my venerable parent, who are endowed with that true greatness of mind, which can look down with equal indifference on the soothing praise of flattery, or the scornful sneer of pride; who, independent of the favour of the fickle, and the regards of the inconstant, derive a happiness from the humble consciousness of superior virtue, that infinitely transcends all which the world can bestow.

Afraid of having already too long trespassed on your patience, I now hasten to conclude, with assuring you how much I am

Your admiring reader,

ALMERIA.

THE BREAKFAST TABLE. *

No. 1.

WHETHER it arises from the spirit of opposition, or from some better principle, I know not; but certain it is, that we in general feel a much stronger predilection for the

* This and the following Essays were composed with the design of contributing to a periodical paper, which it had been in the contemplation of Mrs. Hamilton, and two or three literary friends, to establish: but the scheme was finally abandoned; and all parties acquiesced in the conviction, that this species of composition was quite obsolete in England.

Two of the numbers originally published, having been found to belong to Mrs. Hamilton's co-adjutors, are withdrawn from the present edition.

customs which prevailed in our youth, than our understandings can justify; and that, even in those instances where the change has been most evidently advantageous, we cannot easily be brought to view innovation in the light of improvement.

Hence, perhaps, may proceed the insuperable aversion with which I recoil from the slap-dash mode of entering a room full of company, which, during my absence from the metropolis, has been established by the laws of fashion; and that when I find myself pushed into an assembly, without any other introduction than having my name mumbled over by the fellow who opens the door, I cannot help being very sensibly mortified.

My name, which has flourished in this kingdom from the remotest antiquity, is still as good a name as any in England;

but as there have been a few scoundrels and some blockheads in distant branches of the family, for whom I should not choose to be mistaken, I like, wherever I go, to have it fairly stated, who and what I am; and with regret look back to the good old times, when, as often as I visited a friend, all the company had the good breeding to stand up at my entrance, and the name of Alfred Freeman was repeated by the lady of the house, as she particularly presented me to every guest, with such additions as denoted my claims to notice and respect.

These being my sentiments, I shall, in spite of all remonstrances from the younger part of my family, introduce myself to the reader, by whom I wish to be considered as an acquaintance and friend, in what appears to me a manner the most proper and becoming; and, instead of bolting into his presence with as little ceremony as into the drawing-room of a duchess, shall, while

I announce myself, inform him of every particular that it may anywise concern him to know.

My name and family have already been incidentally mentioned. With regard to their origin, it has been so warmly disputed by antiquaries, that I am afraid to give any opinion concerning it, lest, whichever side I appear to lean to, I should make enemies of the opposite party. And truly, whether the founder of our family was a soldier or a merchant, a Saxon or an aboriginal Briton, seems to me of very little moment. It is of more consequence, in my estimation, to prove, that I have never dishonoured the family from which I sprung; and this I trust will appear from the following short sketch of my history.

I lost my mother in the hour of my birth; but the uncommon portion of tenderness with which nature had endowed

the heart of my surviving parent, in a great measure compensated the misfortune. Some peculiar circumstances had, in his youth, damped the ardour of my father's spirits, and disgusted him with the world; but though he turned with aversion from its public scenes, and looked with a suspicious eye on all who took a part in them, he fervently loved his species, and honoured human nature as the work of God. These peculiarities occasioned the appearance of a whimsical mixture of misanthropy and benevolence in his actions and conduct. But his misanthropy expended itself on the gay and distant crowd, his benevolence on all who came within the sphere of his immediate notice.

The year previous to my birth, the death of his elder brother put my father in possession of such an ample fortune, as might, at an earlier period, have reanimated the latent seeds of ambition; but it came too

late to produce any alteration in the turn of his mind, and, as he moulded mine at his pleasure, has been the probable cause of the little ardour I have evinced in the pursuit of those objects which are in general so highly valued. The love of glory would doubtless have produced for me a greater share of honour and renown than I have aspired after or obtained; but the love of glory, in its common acceptation, was held by my father in contempt. He wished to see me respected and respectable, happy in myself, and the cause of happiness to others; and after much reflection on the subject, concluded, that the surest and safest means of arriving at his object, was to inspire me with a just notion of the duties, and a high relish for the pleasures, annexed to the situation of a country gentleman.

With an avowed deference to the opinions of Mr. Locke, and with a secret view to

his own gratification, my father determined on keeping me at home, until I should be fit for the university; and having provided me with an able tutor, divided with him the task of my instruction.

My father's lessons, as they were the pleasanter of the two, made by far the deepest impression; and being chiefly directed to the heart, which is at that season of life more susceptible than the understanding, were seldom given without effect. My estates were pointed out to me as the sources of my wealth, and as the scene of my future exertions. I was taught to consider myself as connected by other ties than those of selfishness, with every individual who lived upon them; and looked on all, from the rich farmer who employed his capital in the improvement of the sterile soil, to the day-labourer who spent his strength in its cultivation, as beings in whose happiness I was bound to take a

peculiar interest. Great pains were taken to inspire me with a patriotic spirit; but it was my immediate neighbourhood which was the centre of the circle; nor was I stimulated to the acquirement of knowledge or accomplishments by any motive more powerful than that of rendering myself useful and agreeable to the society in which I was to live.

My tutor very cordially entered into my father's views; but thought, that towards rendering me either useful or agreeable, no qualifications were so absolutely requisite, as an accurate knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages, and a competent proficiency in the science of mathematics, — points which he diligently laboured to accomplish.

The day of my first examination at Oxford was a day of triumph to my tutor. From the manner in which I then acquitted

myself, considerable expectations were formed of my abilities; nor were they ever found deficient when similar opportunities of displaying them occurred. But it was only when fairly and regularly brought into action that they did me credit. In company I made no figure. I could not retort the raillery of the witty, nor add to the mirth of my companions, by sneering at the reasonings of the wise. When men of learning were the speakers, I listened to the conversation with a view to my own improvement, and not for the secret purpose of catching some unfortunate phrase, which I might afterwards repeat in such a manner as to throw ridicule on the character of him who uttered it. Though I had a strong relish for wit and humour, I never could learn the happy art of bantering the opponent whose arguments I could not answer: whether he happened to have a long nose or a short one, whether he delivered himself in a drawling or a rapid

accent, I derived no advantage from the circumstance. And though I could not fail to observe how eagerly such opportunities were seized on by the wits around me, and that many owed their reputation solely to their dexterity in this respect, I never could bring myself to imitate their example. My aversion to personal sarcasm remained unconquerable. My dread of it equalled my antipathy; and as the modesty and diffidence of my nature, which had never been corrected by the wholesome discipline of a public school, deprived me of all means of self-defence, every coxcomb who could level the empty blunderbuss of his wit against me, had it in his power to drive me into utter silence. In vain was I conscious of my own superior strength; in vain did I feel assured, that he, before whom I shrunk, was my inferior in knowledge and abilities. If he, by folly and absurdity, could raise a laugh against me, I never disputed his right to the victory.

After quitting the university I went abroad; and during five years that I spent upon my travels, made but little progress in conquering that extreme sensibility, which my dread of the college wits had nourished and increased.

In the course of the last three months that I spent in Paris, I was indeed beginning to make some approaches towards the recovery of my self-possession; and had even proceeded so far in conquering the extreme bashfulness of my nature, as to speak three or four sentences in a large assembly without dismay. No place could indeed have been better calculated to inspire me with confidence; for there, let me speak as loud as I could, and as long as I had a mind, there were so many others who spoke still louder and longer, that I had little chance of being heard.

Even in more select society, I found the courtesy of the Parisians highly favourable to my improvement; and doubt not, that had I continued to cultivate the intimacy which I was beginning to form with some charming women of high *ton*, who claimed the merit of having given the last polish to many of my countrymen, the consequence would have been highly beneficial to my future character. But, unfortunately for me, before I had time to reap the advantage of their instructions, I was, by accounts of my father's illness, recalled to England.

He survived to embrace me; and had the happiness, before he died, of seeing me united to the daughter of his most intimate friend, and elected knight of the shire for the county in which we lived.

A new scene of life now opened upon me: new duties pressed, and new engagements were to be fulfilled. During the

sittings of Parliament, I made a point of attending with great diligence to the subjects in debate. Though overtures were made me by all parties, I entered into terms with none; but, adhering to the practice of my ancestors, gave my vote as appeared conducive to the interests of my country. Nor were the exertions which I made for the good of the public confined to a conscientious use of the monosyllables *yea* and *nay*. Many were the schemes of improvement of which I, from time to time, intended to give notice. But, alas! as often as the day arrived, my courage failed. Once I got upon my legs, and, having caught the Speaker's eye, was encouraged, by the marked attention I observed in it, to proceed in my long-intended speech; but unluckily, before my voice had become audible, a gentleman near me happened to cough, and in a manner so peculiar, that I started at the sound. On looking towards the place whence it proceeded, I, to my

utter dismay, beheld the well-known face of one of the Oxford wits, whose sarcastic grin evidently denoted the pleasure he had in witnessing my confusion. Had I observed a tyger on the point of springing on me, it could not have had a greater effect upon my nerves. My heart died within me; my tongue refused its office; the speech which I had conned over with so much care was obliterated from my memory; and, after a few ineffectual efforts at regaining my composure, I was reduced to the necessity of stammering out an apology, and sitting down.

All hopes of serving my country in a public capacity being thus extinguished, I, at the dissolution of Parliament, declined the honour of a re-election; and having recommended it to my constituents, to choose, as my successor, the son of an Irish peer, a gentleman blessed with such strong nerves as not easily to be put out of coun-

tenance, I disposed of my house in town, and fixed my residence at the family mansion, from which I have not been distant thirty miles during the space of nearly the same number of years.

Of ten children that were born to me within the first fifteen years of my marriage, only six survived the diseases of infancy; but they have lived to be the joy and comfort of my existence. We consider each other as confidants and friends. It is at their request, that I have been prevailed upon to quit for a season the retirement which could no longer be enlivened by the presence of the whole animating group. It is at their suggestion, that, on the borders of my grand climacteric, I commence author. It is through their assistance, that I hope to carry on the work which their genius has planned, and which takes its name from that social board, round which, at the appointed hour, we every morning punctually assemble.

An impartial sketch of the characteristic features of these my associates shall be presented in a future paper. It is, in the mean time, my duty to inform the public, that all who are inclined to enliven the *Breakfast Table* by the inoffensive sallies of a sprightly fancy, or to adorn it by the fruits of knowledge and observation, may be assured of having their communications received with gratitude, and treated with attention and respect.

THE BREAKFAST TABLE.

No. 2.

By whatever means the empire of Fashion has been established, whether it has risen into power through the artifices of intrigue, or the boldness of enterprise, we have been too long accustomed to its authority to question the validity of the claims it makes ;

nor would I countenance the factious rebel, who declares an avowed contempt for the decrees of a sovereign, to whom the wise and good of all ages have paid the tribute of respect. I may, however, with all deference, observe, that there are certain bounds to the prerogative, even of this mightiest of princes; and that it behoves us to watch with jealous eye over those encroachments, which, from time immemorial, it has been inclined to make. Let me not, therefore, be accused of any want of due submission, if I presume to decline the authority of FASHION, in certain instances wherein I find her right to dictate has been without due consideration very generally recognised. In all that concerns the outward man, I yield an implicit obedience to her laws; but when she pretends to go beyond this, and claims the keeping of my heart and conscience; when she requires me to mould my opinions on her model, and to regulate my affections by her standard; I solemnly

protest against the requisition as an unwarrantable usurpation upon the rights of common sense.

While I strenuously recommend it to all over whom Fashion has obtained an influence, strictly to examine the nature of her demands, and vigorously to repel every attack she makes upon those powers which Heaven ordained to be for ever free, I would not be understood as expecting to rouse the spirit of resistance in her slaves. Slaves are the acknowledged property of their master, and ought, in every instance, to be left to his sole disposal.

Let all, therefore, who are conscious of having received from Fashion every sentiment and opinion of which they are possessed; all who find themselves destitute of any other standard of right or wrong than that with which Fashion has supplied them; all, in short, who would be reduced to a

state of nakedness in casting off their chains, continue to wear them undisturbed. We are not so cruel as to enjoin silence on the many pretty prattlers of both sexes, who, on subjects of religion, philosophy, and politics, are now so eloquent. Nor would we deprive any party, either in church or state, of the support it receives from the services of those whom Fashion may happen to enlist beneath its banners.

But it is to be feared that Fashion sometimes boasts dominion over minds of a higher order; secretly perverting where she does not appear to lead; and insidiously exerting a pernicious influence where her authority is avowedly contemned. How much the progress of knowledge may thus have been retarded, is a question of some importance; but at present we shall direct our enquiries to a point still more universally interesting, and endeavour to show from the example of former ages, that

Fashion has, in many instances, corrupted the purity of moral principle.

The manners and morals of a nation are so intimately connected, that from a knowledge of the former, the latter can always with tolerable accuracy be predicted. In the manners of every age there is some predominant feature, some peculiar characteristic, which distinguishes it as much from the preceding ages, as from the foreign nations with which it is contemporary. Nor is it only in the ceremonies of address, or forms of deportment, that this general character may be observed; it impresses its signet on the eloquence and literature of the times; extends to the intercourses of private life; and even gives its colouring to the current of conversation.

Of the peculiarities which have, in a manner, individualised the several periods of our history, a sufficient number of in-

stances will occur to the reader's recollection. However these may differ from each other, they have a common origin; being all alike the offspring of sympathy and imitation. Whatever garb they may assume, we trace, in every lineament, the parents from whom they are descended; and under all the varieties of their appearance, observe incontestible proofs of their being still the same.

Fashion, during the usurpation of Cromwell, taught fine ladies and gentlemen to boast of having said their prayers; and to take some merit from the length and frequency of their devotions. Beaus then walked erect and prim, turned up their eyes, and talked of seeking the Lord! Belles spoke with abhorrence of the trappings of vanity, and poured forth their eloquence in the discussion of controversial dogmas. All who then panted for distinction, assumed the formality of deportment

which was deemed a sign of grace; and indulged in the bitterness of censure, which Fashion determined to be the most essential proōf of zeal.

But when, as Hudibras expresses it,

> " Rebellion began for lack
> Of zeal and plunder to grow slack,
> The cause and covenant to lessen
> And Providence t' be out of season ;"

Fashion changed her black domino for a birth-day suit; and taught her pupils to speak another language. All was now dance and song, ribaldry and profaneness. No man could produce any claim to gentility who was not a wit, nor any lady be considered as qualified to lead the mode, until she had sacrificed her reputation. Religion and morality were now exploded as equally vulgar; and so deeply rooted was the aversion which Fashion then conceived for them, that *she has by some been thought never thoroughly to have conquered it.*

It must be allowed, that no two periods of our history afford a more striking illustration of the power of Fashion, than those to which I have referred. That the general tone of manners adopted by each was the result of sympathy and imitation, will not, I apprehend, admit of dispute; and if this be granted, we must of consequence infer, that, with the exception of the few individuals, whom the influence of station or of talents, of power or of popularity, enabled to give the law to Fashion, the manners of each period were assumed by the mass without consulting either reason or inclination; and that, had the order of time been changed, those who listened with rapture to the orators of the conventicle, would have shone as patrons of the theatre, and claimed the admiration of their gay compeers, for having lent their assistance in driving decency from the stage.

The wits of Charles's reign for whom this achievement was reserved, had they been under the dominion of the Covenant, would have exerted their talents as Fashion then directed; and would, no doubt, have been eminent for holding forth with vehemence on the topics then in vogue. Under the influence of Fashion they would have learned to

> " Quarrel with minc'd pies, and disparage
> Their best and dearest friend, plum porridge;
> Fat pig and goose itself t' oppose,
> And blaspheme custard through the nose."

But convinced as we may be that the slaves of Fashion would, under every change of circumstances, have given equal proofs of implicit subjection to her authority, we are not to imagine that the individuals, whose sentiments and manners she thus moulded at her pleasure, were sensible of the yoke. While they were in bondage, they considered themselves free; and no more doubted that the contempt which

they felt for obsolete opinions, was the genuine offspring of superior intellect, than any young lady now can doubt, that the preference she gives to muslin drapery, in comparison of rich brocade, is proof of a superior taste.

The chains of Fashion are ever invisible to those who wear them; nor is it until they have been for some time cast aside, that we can form any judgment of their strength. We have seen them in one instance inflicting the thraldom of hypocrisy; and, in another, enslaving the soul to sensuality and licentiousness. But let me ask, what is now our opinion of the man, who, in either period, evinced himself possessed of sufficient courage to assert his freedom? Is it not to him alone that we now present the tribute of admiration? Yes. For our judgment with regard to him is now unbiassed. He who, in the reign of fanaticism, retained such a reverence for divine truths,

as led him to reject as trivial the objects of contention; who, while he despised the affectation of austerity, and the language of enthusiasm, continued firm in faith and principles; however he might be despised by the leaders of fashion among his contemporaries, will now receive the honour due to his integrity. Nor will the man who, in the gay court of Charles, could dare to continue virtuous, be now denied the meed of approbation. The latter indeed had trials to endure of a more fiery nature than any to which the former was exposed, for what were censures and excommunications when compared to the sneer of ridicule and the sarcastic jests of wit!

When we carry our researches back to the remoter regions of antiquity, we still find the power of Fashion no less prevalent; nor do we, throughout the long course of history, meet with a single period in which

its influence was not conspicuously displayed.

In the Roman republic, Fashion, for a short time, assumed such a singularity of deportment as will render that era for ever famous. She then decreed, that her subjects should not only talk of heroic and patriotic virtues, but that they should actually carry them into practice. While this humour lasted, she smiled on poverty when ennobled by illustrious deeds, and banished riches and villainy from her presence. She inspired her votaries with a love of honour and a thirst for glory; and taught all who pretended to distinction to sacrifice private interest for their country's good. Never, certainly, has Fashion given a more extraordinary proof of her power than she then displayed; but whether the sturdy virtues, who were then her prime ministers, were found too unmanageable to be long retained in her service, or whether

the natural capriciousness of her temper occasioned their dismissal, it is well known that they soon fell into disgrace; and that all the efforts of their friends to reinstate them in her favour, have hitherto proved ineffectual.

A view of the consequences that have ensued from the change of measures that were then adopted, shall be the subject of a future paper.

THE BREAKFAST TABLE.

No. 3.

As I was taking up my pen, in order to resume the strictures upon Fashion, my youngest son precipitately entered my study, and, without offering any apology for interrupting me, exclaimed that it was needless to go on! The *Breakfast Table* was demolished, absolutely demolished! It had been pulled to pieces at *Clara*'s rout, and would never get upon its legs again!

I begged him to explain himself in language a little more intelligible; and at length learned that Mr. *Smatterer*, whose opinion is looked on as decisive in such matters, had, at the above-mentioned assembly, on being asked by Lady *Yawnwell* what he thought of the *Breakfast Table*, pronounced it to be *intolerably dull.*

"And is this all?" asked I, peevishly.

"All!" rejoined Tom; "why, is not this sufficient? If Lady *Yawnwell* makes it the fashion to call your essays dull, were they to concentrate all the wit and wisdom that now is, or ever was, or ever will be in the world, none would dare to discover it. It is but this moment that, as I passed the bookseller's in Bond-street, leaning on *Jack Flippant*, I asked him if he knew what was thought of that paper, pointing to the advertisement. "What, the *Breakfast Table?*" said Jack. "Oh! it is egre-

giously stupid!" "Have you read it?" said I.—"Not I, faith," cried Flippant; "I never looked at it, egad; but I know it will never get into fashion; for all the literati at Lady Yawnwell's *conversazioni* pronounced it the dullest thing on earth."

We then stepped into Hookham's, where we found *Echo* and *Sneer*, enquiring if the *Breakfast Table* of to-day was yet come out.

"A d—d clever thing this," cried Echo: "I hear of it every where; and am intimately acquainted with the author, who is one of the gayest young fellows in England."

"Some garreteer, I suppose," said Sneer; "one who is hired by the booksellers to vamp up the musty morals of Addison and Johnson, and thrust them on the public in a new form. Lady Yawnwell declares she

has never been able to read a paper to an end; and Mr. Smatterer—"

"Does Mr. Smatterer, too, declare against it?" asked Echo, looking aghast: "then I suppose I must have been misinformed; but I assure you I heard it called a good thing by Sir Charles Penzance; and he is generally considered as pretty good authority."

"Yes," replied Sneer; "on books of the last century Sir Charles speaks with tolerable accuracy; but he knows no more of the taste of the town, than his old grandmother at the family mansion."

Echo acquiesced in the observation, and set off, determined to abuse the *Breakfast Table* wherever he went. "So, Sir," continued my son, "you perceive that the battle is lost. Our forces can never make a stand against the enemy, with

Smatterer and Yawnwell at their head. A plague on their impertinence: I wish —"

"And can you," returned I, "be so silly as to imagine that the opinion of the public will, in any degree, be influenced by such people as those you mention?— But here comes Mr. Townly: to him we shall refer the question; and I know no one so well qualified to decide."

Mr. Townly is a gentleman of high birth and moderate fortune, who, having neither profession nor employment, spends his life in a sort of systematic idleness, courting the society of men of letters, and cultivating the intimacy of the most distinguished personages in the *beau monde* with equal assiduity. It is, therefore, not without reason that he piques himself upon his knowledge of *the world*, a term which, as far as I can observe, is, in its general acceptation, synonimous with a knowledge

of the manners which prevail, and the opinions which get into circulation, in certain sets, from whom these manners and opinions are universally disseminated.

Mr. Townly was no sooner seated, than I informed him of the point in dispute between me and my son, and asked him, whether he deemed it possible that a work of any merit could be essentially injured from being slightingly spoken of by two or three pretenders to taste, who, so far from being able to give any account of its contents, had not even read a single page of the publication.

" Most certainly it may," replied Mr. Townly: " the case, as you have stated it, my dear Sir, is obvious. Who thinks of investigating the merits of a work? Who has leisure to read with so much attention, as to be able to form any opinion for himself? Let me know the name of the book

you were speaking of, and ten to one but I can furnish you with the history of its fate."

It was not, I said, a book: it was a publication of no great pretensions, a periodical —— "The *Breakfast Table*, I presume," said Mr. Townly, interrupting me. I nodded assent, and fear I must have looked a little foolish; but, without noticing my confusion, he burst into a loud laugh. "Excellent!" exclaimed he — "very excellent, indeed! I'd lay a thousand to one this came through Sam Smatterer, who tormented me so much to know what was said of the thing, that I imagined he had some interest in it; and thought to mortify the puppy, by telling him it was pronounced too dull for criticism. The next minute I heard him repeat my very words to Lady Yawnwell; and have since learned, that Her Ladyship, in her drawling way, tells every one she meets, that the

Breakfast Table is so stupid it makes her nervous to hear it mentioned."

"And who will be guided by the opinion of Lady Yawnwell?"

"Half the town, and that half will lead the other half before the expiration of a fortnight. Only wait the issue of my experiment."

"To the gentlemen concerned in this work the experiment must be extremely amusing! but I presume, by *the town*, you mean a few silly women of fashion, who pretend to literature, and the loungers by whom their coteries are frequented."

"No, upon my honour," Mr. Townly gravely replied. "I mean not only persons of the description you allude to, but those of a superior order, — persons of cultivated taste, and discriminating judgment, but

who dare neither exert their own judgment, nor consult their own taste, in opposition to the tide of Fashion. More than half the books which every body reads, and, consequently, which every body must read who would open their lips in company, are read and talked of, on the strength of their having, no one knows how, got into fashion. I have in my recollection a silly novel, about lords, and lakes, and mountain spirits, and maids who died for love, which had a greater run than any book published within my memory; for which it was entirely indebted to the good-nature of Cleora, whose waiting-maid was sister to the author, and prevailed upon her mistress to ask all her friends whether they had read such a novel."

"But, surely, Mr. Townly, every work must have some character of its own to recommend it; and I should presume, that if the book you speak of had not been

adapted to the public taste, it would never have had so much of the public approbation."

"Again, my dear Sir, you are mistaken," returned Mr. Townly. "No books are so universally read as those that are universally abused."

"And pray, Sir," said Tom, brightening at the observation, "pray, tell us, by what means an author may contrive to procure for himself the honour of being read and abused by every body. The writer of a periodical essay, for instance: how must he conduct himself? on what subjects must he employ his pen, in order to push his work into fashion?"

"There are but two methods that I know of," returned Mr. Townly; "and these are almost equally infallible. He may either attack private character, and make

his work a vehicle for every scandalous anecdote which malignity has put in circulation concerning individuals, whom either rank, beauty, merit, or talents, have elevated to that conspicuous height, which envy hates to look on: or, he may vent the same portion of malignity in another channel, and turn it in full force against his brother authors, under the name of criticism. Only let him take care, in either case, to be sufficiently severe. The same mediocrity of talents will suit either species of composition; but, in order to succeed in the former, it is necessary that he should have cultivated an extensive intimacy with the upper servants in families of distinction; as it is on them he must chiefly depend for information; and as this may be attended with some trouble, and some expence, I should think the path of criticism the safer and easier of the two.

"Criticism!" I indignantly exclaimed, "what a profanation of the sacred term! Why, Sir, an assassin has as good a right to be called a dispenser of justice, as a vender of malignity to be called a critic. In point of moral turpitude, they are nearly on a level; and, in spite of all you have said, it is impossible but that the feelings of mankind must revolt against them both."

"Yes, as far as the danger extends. But, mark the difference. Every man has a throat to cut, and consequently it is every man's business to hunt down the assassin whose dagger may be employed against him; but from the murderer of reputation, none have any thing to fear, except the few who have attained celebrity. From the poignard of the critic, none can receive a wound but those who voluntarily expose themselves to the blow."

"I cannot," I replied, "admit the inference, as I utterly deny the propriety of the figure under which your proposition is couched. Criticism carries no dagger. She is, as Johnson expresses it, the eldest daughter of Labour and of Truth; at her birth committed to the care of Justice, and brought up by her in the palace of Wisdom."

"I perceive," replied my friend, "that we are falling into the common error of disputants, who affix different meanings to the same words, and then wonder at each other's perversity. You think of criticism as an art, to the practice of which none are competent but the learned and judicious; — an art, for which men must be prepared by study, and for which they never can be qualified, unless endowed with that delicacy of perception which renders the mind susceptible of all the emotions

of sublimity and beauty. I, on the other hand, speak of criticism as it is now understood, — an art which may be practised by any one who is master of sufficient impudence to affect contempt for every species of composition to which his genius is unequal. A critic of this order has nothing to do with the merits of the work which he chooses to make the theme of his disquisition. If there is any thing in the situation of the author, to which a sarcastic allusion can possibly be made; any personal defect which can be dragged into notice; any peculiarity of dress or deportment which can be pointed at, so as to excite a laugh; the business is finished: the triumph of the critic is complete. A work so seasoned will never fail to make its way. Advise your periodical essayist to pursue the course I have pointed out, and he will in a few weeks be the favourite of the town."

" What!" cried I, " advise a man of honour to become pander to the malignant passions of the multitude! To prostitute his talents in the service of malevolence! and to mount the stage as a gladiator, that he may make sport for the rabble, by exhibiting his dexterity in inflicting wounds! No, Sir; in my opinion no one ought to address the public, who has not sufficient firmness to maintain his ground, whatever direction the torrent of popularity may chance to take. If it sets in against him, he ought to be convinced that integrity, truth, and independence, will enable him to stem, perhaps to turn the stream: and if these principles are his guides, they will conduct him to an eminence which envy cannot reach, and crown him with laurels which malevolence cannot wither."

THE BREAKFAST TABLE.

No. 4.

THE account which I am now to give of my family is particularly addressed to the ladies who do me the honour of taking *The Breakfast Table* under their protection. If they vouchsafe to smile, the snarl of the critic shall pass unheeded. More formidable censures than those which critics can fulminate, I now indeed must brave; for in speaking of my children, I find it impossible to avoid making such a discovery of my paternal fondness, as I have reason to fear may expose me to the contempt of every fashionable father throughout the kingdom.

In hopes that a candid avowal of the weakness of which I am conscious, may blunt the arrows of censure, I shall make a frank confession of the inconsistencies into which it occasionally betrays me. I am,

for instance, thoroughly persuaded that my daughters are not the handsomest women in England; yet go where I will, in country or in town, in the circle at the drawing-room, or in assemblies where beauty appears to more advantage from the simplicity of decoration, wherever I turn my eyes, I see nothing so lovely as my own two girls. They are, in truth, very pretty; and I perceive that they attract more eyes than mine; but I perceive likewise, that, as yet, an approving smile from me kindles in their cheeks a brighter lustre than is inspired by the notice of any of the fops around them.

However partial I may be towards my own children, when compared with the children of other people, I have not studied their characters to so little purpose, as to be incapable of faithfully delineating them. If I see where each excels, I also see where either happens to be defective. I perceive,

too, that strangers are very apt to be mistaken in both instances; and infer, that the good people who take upon them to pronounce decidedly concerning the merits or demerits of those with whom they are superficially acquainted, ought to have their verdict in all instances received *cum grano salis*.

My elder daughter, Josephine, is extolled as a miracle of good sense by all her mother's visitors. By her own companions she is no less esteemed; and though set before them as an example of prudence and propriety, contrives to escape the envy generally excited by uncommon merit. I am very sensible that she deserves all the encomiums bestowed upon her; but at the same time cannot help observing, how much she is indebted for them to the quiescent gentleness of her temper and manners, which leads her to assume the appearance of a *profound* deference for the

sentiments and opinions of those who address themselves to her in conversation. She never ventures upon a remark that has any pretensions to originality, nor utters a sentence that can admit of dispute; but there is at the same time such an air of propriety in all she says, that she never speaks without being listened to with satisfaction.

No one ever possessed the happy art of obliging in such perfection as Josephine; yet no one ever appeared to use less exertion. I know not how it is that she contrives to be always at hand exactly at the moment her aid is wanted. If a note is to be written, Josephine is at the desk; if a rent is to be darned, the needle is in the hand of Josephine. She supplies all her friends with purses and pincushions of her own making, contrived with wonderful ingenuity, and executed with inimitable skill: but though always busy, she

never appears to be so much engaged, as to render any one afraid of interrupting her.

Agnes is not so universal a favourite as her elder sister. It is only where she is thoroughly known that she is entirely beloved: and she is only to be known by such as are possessed of qualities in some degree congenial with her own. Her whole soul glows with the fire of genius; the more celestial fire of virtue warms her heart: her ardent mind expands to the reception of every new idea; her sensibility vibrates to the emotions of all who suffer or complain. But in the common business of life, Agnes takes no interest. In the chit chat, which in common characters supplies the place of conversation, she bears no part.

By some, who extol the good sense of Josephine, Agnes is pronounced intolerably stupid. To five-and-twenty questions, put to her one morning in my presence, by

Mrs. Wiseman, who is esteemed the cleverest woman in our parish, Agnes could not give one satisfactory answer. She neither knew the names, nor the number of the vicar's visitors, nor whether they would appear at the county ball: nor did she know the exact sum that had been given for Mr. Squanderfield's estate; nor, though she had attended her mother to the sale of his furniture for two successive days, could she tell the price of any one article, not even of the new sophas on which Mrs. Wiseman had set her heart. But had Mrs. Wiseman made any enquiry after the orphans whom Mr. Squanderfield had left destitute, the silent Agnes would instantly have been transformed into a speaker excelling herself in eloquence as much as in understanding. In regard either to the present situation or future prospects of these unfortunate innocents, none could have instructed her with equal accuracy; for by Agnes had the former been discovered,

and the latter planned. And though she could not give all the information respecting the vicar's guests, which Mrs. Wiseman deemed essential, she could have recapitulated each ingenious remark that they had uttered in the course of conversation on the preceding evening; and from these have drawn such lively sketches of their minds, as, I doubt not, would have appeared abundantly characteristic.

At home, Agnes is the soul of the domestic circle. She enlivens every topic by the vivacity of her fancy, and is so fertile in the production of such as are at once agreeable and interesting, that we, in her presence, forget our cares. Into all families petty cares will unavoidably intrude. From disquiets of a more serious nature, few are for any length of time exempt. All circumstances of the former description are instantly referred to Josephine: but

when difficulties press ; when anxiety clouds the brow, or sorrow heaves the heart ; it is to Agnes we resort for sympathy, for counsel, or for consolation.

Were it possible to endow either of my daughters with the qualities of the other, in addition to her own, imagination could produce nothing more perfect. But to perfection, nature, by rendering certain qualities incompatible with others, has presented an insuperable obstacle. In weighing the merit of individuals, we must not throw the peculiar virtues of two characters into the opposite scales, until we have from each fairly deducted the sum of its peculiar imperfections.

If, upon the subject of my daughters, I should appear to have been somewhat tedious, I beg the critic to spare his censure of my prolixity, until he is himself a father.

In the account of my sons, I, however, promise to be more laconic. They will, indeed, hereafter, speak so much for themselves, that a slight introduction will be for them sufficient. But my daughters, though they may sometimes be found to have inspired the theme, will lend no other aid towards these weekly essays, than may incidentally occur from the use made of their remarks; for, partial as I am to their abilities, I have not so little respect for the public, as to suppose that it could receive instruction from the inexperienced. That they could write as well as most young ladies write, I can easily persuade myself; nay, I believe they could write as well as some young gentlemen have written; but until I am better instructed in the advantages accruing to society from the literary labours of those young ladies and gentlemen who have written more than they have read, my daughters shall not, as authors, make their appearance.

My eldest son, now in the thirty-third year of his age, is, in my opinion, a very accomplished gentleman. An unfortunate deafness with which he has been afflicted from his childhood, by diminishing the pleasures of social intercourse, has led him to place his chief delight in books. His natural talents are remarkable rather for solidity than splendour: hence his acquirements, though extensive and multifarious, are never brought forward to dazzle, though often made use of to instruct. Having no vanity to gratify, he speaks not to be admired, but to convince. Truth is, in all discussions, the sole supporter of his arguments; and in all enquiries truth is the sole object of his pursuit. I observe with regret, that he has not since his arrival in London, derived all the pleasure from the choice society it affords, which he seemed to expect. He has never indeed expressed his disappointment by words.

My three younger sons excel, if I mistake not, their elder brother in point of abilities: but with all their superior brilliancy, I doubt whether any one of them will equal him in those powers of discrimination which depend no less on the coolness, and comprehension of the judgment, than on the quickness of the discerning faculty. I have, however, reason to imagine that neither the young gentlemen themselves, nor any of their respective companions, would be willing to subscribe to the opinion I have now stated. Each is, I find, the favourite of the circle in which he moves; a circumstance which it gives me great pleasure to observe, as it shews, that where they are best known, they are most esteemed.

Having been educated on the good old plan of discipline and obedience, they have all entered without murmuring into the professions which I chose for them, when

they were, in my opinion, incompetent to choose for themselves. The principles which influenced me in the choice, have never been to them explained. They are, indeed, as far as I know, peculiar to myself, and, in some respects, are directly opposite to those which actuate the generality of parents on similar occasions. Instead of being guided by the temper and dispositions of my boys, to the professions that seemed congenial to their bent, I studied their minds and tempers, with a determined resolution of placing them in situations most opposite to those to which nature or habit appeared to lead. Thus Ned, who was a wit from his cradle, and who from infancy showed evident symptoms of a courage which no danger could appal, and of an assurance which no company could daunt, I, before he had reached his tenth year, destined to the church. His brother James, who had all his life been troubled with an excess of bashfulness, I placed at

the bar; and cannot but congratulate myself on perceiving how fast the original infirmity of his nature begins to yield to the influence of the acquired habits of his profession. I have the comfort to observe the same with regard to Tom, whose inherent gentleness and timidity, are now scarcely discernible, to any eye less penetrating than that of a parent, so completely have they been counteracted by the society of his brother officers in the —— regiment of guards.

By my endeavours to supply what was deficient, and to correct what was redundant, I have, as I flatter myself, preserved in the characters of my sons, that happy equipoise, which restrains genius from running into eccentricity, and prevents reserve from sinking into dulness.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Printed by A. Strahan,
Printers-street, London.